Interview with Dean Rusk

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

SECRETARY DEAN RUSK

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Q: All right, sir, if we should be interrupted by anything, I can turn this off without any difficulty and can do so with ease. Let's get your identification, which takes very little time, on the beginning of the tape. You're Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and you served in that office longer than any other man except Cordell Hull; from the beginning of the John Kennedy Administration through the end in 1969 of the Lyndon Johnson Administration.

RUSK: That is correct.

Q: Suppose we begin, as you suggested, sir, by just a general question—the type of man that you found President Lyndon Johnson to be.

RUSK: Well, Lyndon Johnson was a powerful personality and a very complex one. I won't go into those general attributes which are well-known to the public, but rather reflect upon some of the qualities which struck me as one of his close associates.

To begin with, he had an all-consuming commitment to his job as President. He had become President through the great tragedy of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and it was as though he felt that since he had not been the first choice for President, he was

going to do everything that he possibly could to be a good President and to be a great President.

He was a severe task-master, in the first instance for himself. He never spared himself, and his colleagues were anxious from time to time about whether he might draw upon himself another heart attack. He worked late at night, he worked early mornings, he took his evening reading to his bedside with him, and that kept him up frequently most of the time until one or two o'clock in the night. He would wake up at four or five o'clock in the morning and call the Operations Room of the Department or the White House to see how things were going in Vietnam.

We repeatedly tried to get him to take time away from his desk or from his job, and relax and get some refreshment, but we were relatively unsuccessful in doing so. Even when he was at the ranch the telephone was busy and he had staff present to keep in touch with what was going on. In other words he fully committed himself to his job.

He placed a great emphasis upon performance rather than words. I remember during the first week of his Presidency he called me on the phone one day and asked me what was being done under the Alliance for Progress. I gave him a rather general summary in State Department language, and he said very impatiently, “I don't mean all that. I mean what are we doing—what are we actually doing? Send me a list of the actual actions that we're taking under the Alliance for Progress and what actions the Latin Americans themselves are taking.” And the historian will notice that when Lyndon Johnson became President the actual commitments of funds and of action under the Alliance for Progress went up very rapidly because he was interested in getting the job done.

When India found itself in difficulty about its food problem, it was perfectly apparent that the United States would not be able simply to make up India's deficiencies and that India would have to go through a revolution in its own agriculture if it were to feed itself. Lyndon Johnson assigned Secretary of Agriculture [Orville] Freeman the task of requiring

India to take major new steps in the agricultural field as a condition for any substantial food assistance from the United States. Now, he followed that very carefully and was concerned about the performance of India in its own behalf. He took the view that the President of the United States could not be more concerned about feeding Indians than the Prime Minister of India, and unless the Prime Minister and the Cabinet in India took the steps necessary to feed their own people, there was nothing the United States could do about it.

He was impatient with delay. One good example comes from the procedure by which we appoint Ambassadors. When we make a decision to send Mr. X to a particular post, it is then necessary to ask the host government for what is called an agrement, to receive the Ambassador. Normally, these agr#ments take about ten days to two weeks because they go through certain procedures in other governments. Our own normal procedure requires about a week because it has to go through the State Department and go to the President. But President Johnson soon developed the habit of wanting immediate agrement for any man that he had named, and asked our Ambassadors abroad to go to the host government to get oral agr#ments in order that the announcement could be made immediately and the name go to the Senate without any delay. Now, part of this was his desire to avoid leaks to the press during the period when the agr#ment was being expected, but it was just a small example of a habit he had of wanting to go ahead just as soon as the decision was made. Sometimes that crowded his colleagues and crowded other governments.

Lyndon Johnson was a man of high intelligence. I never sat in a session with him about even the most complex and technical matters when I had any impression that he was failing to grasp all that was involved and was missing the key issues that were before him. That high intelligence was concealed—at least as far as some snobbish Eastern intellectuals were concerned—by a Southern accent and his Southern mannerisms, but he

was a man of great intellectual capacity and had an ability to understand the issues that were in front of him clearly and in great depth.

I found him extraordinarily well-informed about foreign affairs. I think his experience as Majority Leader during the Eisenhower Administration brought him into daily contact with the principal issues of foreign affairs over that period of time. While Vice President he followed foreign affairs very closely and traveled to foreign countries a great deal. He sat with us in the National Security Council and sat with us in the Cabinet, and I had many informal talks with him while he was Vice President about what was going on in the Department of State. So he came into the office well-informed about most of the key issues of foreign policy. He never represented himself to be an expert on foreign policy, but as President he knew that this was a major preoccupation of his and he kept closely in touch with it at all stages.

He was a man with great persuasive ability. I've seen him in meetings with businessmen and labor leaders and Senators and Congressmen and in the Cabinet and in discussions with foreign dignitaries; and he had a knack for persuasion. When he made a decision, he had generally thought about it in great detail, and he was well abreast of it, and had mobilized in his own mind the reasons why he wanted to do one thing rather than another. That put him in a position to talk persuasively about his decisions with anyone with whom he was in contact.

President Johnson gave his loyalty to his colleagues and expected their loyalty in return. He didn't spend any time cutting up one colleague in the presence of another. He supported his colleagues and joined with them when they were subject to attack from the outside. He, however, expected the same kind of loyalty in return, and I know that there were times when he became very upset when he would hear through the press or through Georgetown gossip that one or another colleague was undermining him by remarks made at cocktail parties or in off-the record conversations with members of the press. He resented those who tried to build up a record at his expense.

Once in awhile an Ambassador abroad or some senior colleague in government would write in memoranda disagreeing with particular policies. The President was not willing to engage in correspondence with such individuals. He expected members of his Administration to follow his decisions when they were made. He was willing to listen to anything they had to say before the decision was made, but he expected them to comply with a decision when it had been reached. And he, therefore, was always impatient with those who were trying to build on the record a record of dissent.

Lyndon Johnson had deep feelings about his objectives. His objectives were large and bold. He didn't think in small terms. He thought in the most far reaching terms. When you think about his attitude on civil rights and on poverty, or his passion for peace, one got the impression that these were matters that came not just out of his mind but out of his heart and soul. His glandular reactions were very strong in behalf of his program, and it was very marked in his personal conversation how strong he felt about some of the things he was trying to achieve.

Lyndon Johnson had an instinctive way of putting himself in the other fellow's shoes. As a matter of fact when an issue came up, his first habit was to try to figure out what was in the other fellow's mind, what his motivations were, what his own problems were, what his situation was, what freedom of action the other fellow may have. Now, he was constantly groping to try to understand a man like Kosygin, or a woman like the Prime Minister of India. He was trying to find out where our own policy came into conflict with the policy of others, and one of the ways to do that is to try to figure out just what really lies behind the policy of the other fellow. He spent a great deal of time thinking about what kind of a man Kosygin was, what pressures were upon him, and how he looked at the world, how that would fit into the possibility of any agreement between ourselves and the Soviet Union. When Lyndon Johnson talked to businessmen, he reflected a deep understanding of the problem of the businessman; and when he talked to labor, the same thing would be

true. He had an extraordinary way, perhaps derived from his experience in the Senate, of putting himself in the other fellow's shoes.

One interesting aspect of President Johnson's tenure of office was a certain code of conduct which he felt in relation to other political leaders. He never, for example, would allow any of his colleagues to criticize President de Gaulle as an individual. He suppressed all temptations to attack de Gaulle personally, and you won't find in the public record anywhere personal attacks by President Johnson on men like Kosygin, or Mao Zedong or Ho Chi Minh. He did not believe that political leaders should attack each other personally. He also felt that political leaders should not cause each other unnecessary problems. I remember on one occasion Sir Alec Douglas Home, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, was visiting in the White House. And on the way out of the meeting, Sir Alec met the press at the door of the White House and was drawn into a discussion of British trade with Cuba. Well, that caused President Johnson some resentment because he felt that if Sir Alec wanted to talk about trade with Cuba, he ought to talk about it in the House of Commons back home and not talk about it on the front steps of the White House.

Q: This was the buses for Cuba—?

RUSK: That was the buses for Cuba issue. He felt that it would have been more considerate for Sir Alec not to cause Lyndon Johnson any problems here in this country by what he said on Lyndon Johnson's own doorstep, but do it under other circumstances. Now, that was just a part of his code of conduct in relation to other political leaders.

President Johnson was always considerate of his Cabinet officers. I think he felt that they were the ones who shared with him the public responsibility and the Constitutional and statutory responsibilities of office. It was the Cabinet officers who had to appear most often before the Congress to defend a program. It was the Cabinet officers who met the press and helped to carry the public explanation of policy, and who had to share the ultimate responsibility. So President Johnson always tried to protect the position of his Cabinet

officers. He didn't undercut them by going behind them into the depths of their respective departments and giving instructions to subordinates without the knowledge of the Cabinet officer. He typically operated through the Cabinet officer himself. He was prepared to delegate responsibility.

In the Department of State, we sent out something like a thousand cables a day, and I suppose President Johnson might have averaged seeing one or two of those cables every day. He wanted to be kept informed about what was happening, and he preferred not to read about important matters in the press before he had heard about it from his Cabinet officer So every day we would send over a memorandum of principal developments in the Department of State which was a part of his evening reading, and those memoranda are on the record and can be consulted to see how intimately he was kept informed about what was going on.

But he was not jealous of his Cabinet colleagues. He spent no time in trying to diminish their stature in any way. He took the view that a strong Cabinet officer meant a stronger Administration, and that a successful Cabinet officer was a part of a successful Presidency. So he was always very considerate in dealing with his principal colleagues.

He was impatient about the inability or the unwillingness of senior colleagues to agree among themselves. He disliked the role of refereeing among senior colleagues, and that wasn't because he hesitated to make a decision. He was always prepared to make a decision, but I think he wanted his colleagues to try to do everything they possibly could to find out what is best for the United States. He wanted his senior colleagues to try to come to conclusions which they would reach if they themselves were President. The President himself cannot escape the responsibility of decisions, and it was necessary therefore for the Secretary of State, or the Secretary of Defense, or the Secretary of Commerce, or any of the others, to put themselves in his shoes and try to come to a conclusion of a sort that the President should make, and not just put up their own specialized points of view.

I would like to record that the Secretary of Defense and I, Mr. [Robert S.] McNamara, almost never went to the President with a divided opinion. We took it upon ourselves to make a special effort to reach a common conclusion, and that didn't mean that President Johnson would always accept our common conclusion. He had views of his own, but he wanted to have the best effort of his colleagues invested in the problem before the President himself came to a final result.

I would add that Lyndon Johnson was a man of great personal kindness and consideration. He was ready with a word of encouragement and a word of appreciation and thoughtfulness in regard to one's personal situations and personal circumstance, and matters of illness or weariness or developments in the family always found him to be a personal friend of his senior colleagues. That was a very marked characteristic of his.

Q: As you notice in scanning down my list here, you've anticipated a good number of the things that I wanted to be certain to get on this record. Did you know Mr. Johnson at all in your earlier diplomatic career, when he was a young Senator in the late 1940's and you were already a senior official in the State Department?

RUSK: I had met him, but I can't say that I really knew him, in any serious meaning of the word, until he became Vice President.

Q: You mentioned that you thought he had paid close attention to issues, at least during the Eisenhower years, in foreign policy. Do you know that he was particularly close, say, to Secretary Dulles or any of the other officials in the foreign policy community?

RUSK: Well, as Majority Leader for six of those years during the Eisenhower Administration, it was necessary for him to be in close touch with the Administration because of the vast amount of legislation affecting foreign policy. The President doesn't have a dime and doesn't have a man that isn't provided by the Congress, so almost all elements of foreign policy come before the Congress in one way or another.

The Majority Leader, in managing the legislative program with the Congress, must necessarily be familiar with the details of most of that legislation, because it would be his responsibility to see that it is enacted into law. So I think his experience as Majority Leader was invaluable to him in making him entirely familiar with foreign affairs problems.

Now, some subjects were matters of special interest to him. For example, as a Senator he was a leader in the Space Program, and went to the United Nations to deliver a speech, at Eisenhower's request, on the space effort itself.

Q: You said that in the Kennedy Administration he was definitely included in the meetings of importance. In your opinion he was not left outside when a matter of critical importance was being discussed?

RUSK: That's right. He was always present at meetings of the National Security Council and meetings of the Cabinet. But more particularly he did a good deal of traveling while he was Vice President. On each one of those travels, he would come in for extensive briefings on the problems affecting the countries that he was visiting and would get briefed on the policy so that he was able to talk business with his hosts. So he had as Vice President a pretty good indoctrination into foreign policy and knew what President Kennedy was trying to accomplish in foreign policy.

Q: These trips that he took, at least according to some members of the press, were not spectacular successes. I take it you don't agree with that assessment?

RUSK: No. He did not undertake protracted negotiations on any of these visits. They were good-will visits for the most part, or he attended an inauguration or something of that sort. His job was not to inject himself into protracted negotiations over particular points at issue, but general discussion of relationships between our country and any other country. He always reported back in some detail when he returned and gave the President and the Secretary of State his impressions of his visits and of the people that he had seen during

his visit. I don't know on what basis anyone would say these trips were not successful. I suppose that would come from people who thought that his mission was more than it actually turned out to be.

Q: I think primarily it's the syndrome that makes importance out of an alleged rebel yell in the Taj Mahal, and this type of thing.

RUSK: Well, I think it's fair to Lyndon Johnson to point out that while he was Vice President, there were those around Kennedy and in the press who were prone to needle him. Now he conducted himself with great dignity under that kind of needling and did not respond to it, but it's always fair game to make fun of a Vice President.

Q: As the current one is demonstrating.

RUSK: He had his share of that when he was Vice President. I was always very struck with the extraordinary fact that this man of enormous energy and great drive acted as Vice President with such restraint and such consideration for the position of the President. He put himself under great personal self-discipline and acted like a Vice President, even though all of his instincts were to get out and take the leadership and to move and to drive and to lead: and so his performance there was a performance of great self-restraint.

Q: I understand that you assigned, fairly early in your service as Secretary of State, a regular liaison Foreign Service Officer to the Vice President's office. Whose initiative was that? Was that yours or his?

RUSK: The original idea was mine, but he embraced it. I'm not sure whether this was done with other Vice Presidents or not, but we had a Foreign Service officer assigned to him as personal staff.

Q: Was that Lee Stull?

RUSK: I think he was one of them. I don't have the names at the tip of my tongue, but the function of this Foreign Service Officer was to keep the Vice President fully informed about what was going on. He got the daily intelligence information. He got the daily wrap-up of activities in the Department of State, and he was always available to the Vice President for information. When the Vice President himself had a particular question that he wanted to ask, that officer could always come to the Department and dig out the answer for him, but the purpose of the arrangement was to be sure that the Vice President was constantly informed about what was going on in foreign policy.

Q: And did Mr. Johnson, when he was Vice President, utilize this liaison officer fully—take advantage of him?

RUSK: Yes, I think so. I think he was a very busy man, and of course this man was available to him for his trips and helped to prepare him for his trips.

Q: At the time that President Kennedy was assassinated, you were in an airplane flying to the Far East and had to turn around, so you were not in Washington when Mr. Johnson returned as President. How soon did you have your first conversation with him, and can you describe the circumstances and content of that conversation?

RUSK: I saw him, I think the next day—the first morning of my return, in the Executive Office Building, in his office over there. I went in and told him that I, of course, expected him to have his own Secretary of State, and that I was prepared to put in my resignation. He, on the other hand, asked me to remain in office, and I could do nothing but agree to do so under those circumstances because the burdens he faced were so great that if he really wanted someone to be there to help out under that circumstance of tragedy, there was no choice but to go ahead and do what he wanted you to do.

Q: Were there certain problems in the foreign policy area that seemed to be uppermost in his mind at that time, or that bothered him particularly?

RUSK: We didn't get into those in that first session. It was just a case of my offering to make room for a man of his own choice and his indicating that I was the man of his choice.

Q: So he didn't have any, what you might call in diplomatic terms, “instructions” in that sense?

RUSK: No, no special ones at that time.

Q: As your relationship developed with him personally, how did it grow to compare with what you had experienced with his predecessor? Were you closer or more distant—in what ways?

RUSK: I was somewhat closer in personal terms with Lyndon Johnson than I was with John F. Kennedy. I was very close to John F. Kennedy, but only on an official basis. That is, we were never on first-name terms with each other, for example, under the Kennedy Administration. Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy once told me that I was the only member of the Cabinet that the President called 'Mr. Secretary.” So, although I saw a great deal of President Kennedy, I was not an intimate of President Kennedy's. We had a certain arms-length relationship partly because of the Vietnam war and partly because of the difference of personalities. President Johnson and I got to be much closer personally, and the official relationship was reinforced by a personal friendship.

Q: Was that a consistent thing? The point has been made that President Johnson had periods of “highs” on certain individuals and “lows” on the same individuals—that his favor and his disfavor sort of varied over time. Was that your experience?

RUSK: I couldn't detect that in my own case. We were so much involved with each other, again, partly because of the Vietnam war; and we saw each other very frequently and were on the phone with each other even more frequently. We were in the same foxhole and as neighbors in a foxhole, you get to know each other pretty well. I didn't detect any

ups and downs as far as our personal relations was concerned, although we both had ups and downs as far as policy matters were concerned.

Q: So you might differ on policy, but still it didn't affect your personal working relationship?

RUSK: Well, I don't mean that we were differing on policy. We never wrestled on the rug with each other or anything of that sort, but the two of us together would have our ups and downs as events in the world transpired.

Q: When they got particularly tough, and particularly in connection with Vietnam, and you seemed to be taking perhaps a lot of the Administration's fire, did Mr. Johnson ever indicate that he understood that you were performing this duty and that he sympathized with that and gave due appreciation?

RUSK: Well, my attitude was always that of President Johnson himself. I never let any blue sky show between his point of view and my point of view, so that to the extent that I was taking fire, I was taking fire for his policy. He fully understood that and we have never had any problems as far as that was concerned. He always gave me loyal support, full support, and I did the same for him.

Q: Was accessibility to the President better under Mr. Johnson, or different than it was under Mr. Kennedy?

RUSK: There was no particular difference on that. I saw President Johnson a great deal more than I saw President Kennedy. Again, the Vietnam situation made that inevitable.

Q: Your position as a Kennedy appointee who did stay on throughout the Johnson years—did that cause any suspicion in the early part of the Johnson Presidency—the fact that you were really another President's Secretary of State?

RUSK: I don't think so. I never had any evidence of that as far as President Johnson was concerned, because he kept on a great many of the Kennedy appointees. He took over the

Kennedy Cabinet and made relatively few changes until a good deal of time had elapsed. He took over some of the Kennedy personal staff. He did not come in with a team of his own.

As a Senator, he had been more or less a lone operator. He had not built up around him a large group of people who could make up an administration, so that in his search for people to work with him he naturally turned to a good many of those with whom he had worked as Vice President and kept most of the Kennedy appointees that he found when he became President.

Q: Do you think on the other side of that coin that some of the bitterness of criticism directed at you might be attributable to the fact that some of those making that criticism had been Kennedy people who left and ended up on the other side of policy issues, particularly Vietnam?

RUSK: Well, some of the people around Kennedy were espousing policies that Kennedy himself did not accept.

Q: You mean before the assassination?

RUSK: Before the assassination. After Kennedy died, then they tended to associate their own points of view with President Kennedy. They tried to capture President Kennedy for their own point of view after the assassination. John F. Kennedy was a man who had to make some very hard decisions, and he overrode the advice of a good many of the more frivolous people around him.

Q: This is, perhaps, not directly on President Johnson, but I think it's relevant to the Administration and important. How bad do you think that this type of Kennedy supporter that you were just talking about hurt President Johnson in the early part of his Administration? Did this kind of opposition get him off to a very bad start in some ways?

RUSK: I think there was one point that I regretted very much because I thought and felt that it was false, [and] that is the idea that somehow President Johnson acted with anything short of full consideration and sympathy for the members of the family at the time of the assassination. I had occasion, as Secretary of State, to have to make a good many of the arrangements about the funeral and about the transition of power, and every time I talked to President Johnson about whether we should do this or whether we should do that his customary answer would be, “Whatever the family wants.” He acted with great consideration there, and some of the picayune gossip that somehow put him in a false position to me is just not right. I never saw any of that, and I was in a position to see what his attitude was in the matters that counted.

Q: Particularly the story of the personal blow-up that Mr. Johnson allegedly had at Robert Kennedy at the first Cabinet meeting. Do you think that's false?

RUSK: I don't remember or recollect a Cabinet meeting of that sort at all. It just didn't strike any recollections in my mind at all. I have great skepticism about any such reports.

Q: Did you ever get drawn in in any way to what the press called the “Bobby problem?” Did Mr. Johnson ever confide in you his difficulties with Senator Robert Kennedy?

RUSK: To some degree, but I had had my own Bobby problems when I was Secretary of State under President Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy was a very energetic fellow and liked to dabble in matters affecting other departments of government outside the Department of Justice, and had ideas of his own that sometimes were good and sometimes were bad. When his ideas were bad it took a good deal of doing to get him out of them. But I was never in the middle of any particular controversy between Lyndon Johnson and Robert Kennedy.

Q: One of the things we pick up most consistently is the importance that Mrs. Johnson played in the Johnson Administration and with Lyndon Johnson personally. Do you have any strong impressions of Mrs. Johnson and her role?

RUSK: Well, she was a very great lady and will go down as one of our very finest First Ladies. I have no doubt that she had an important influence on Lyndon Johnson. She was a great source of strength to him. She was always a hard worker and threw herself fully into the requirements of her job. She was indefatigable, was always available to be helpful to people. She had been when she was the Vice President's Lady.

Q: I was going to say—didn't she and Mrs. Rusk establish sort of a working relationship on some projects that early?

RUSK: Well, Mrs. Rusk's duties brought her into close contact with Mrs. Johnson when Mr. Johnson was Vice President. There developed a great esteem, at least as far as Mrs. Rusk was concerned, of Mrs. Johnson. Then that continued and was reinforced when Mrs. Johnson was First Lady. The burdens that fall upon the wife of the President are very heavy, and Mrs. Johnson carried them out literally to the Queen's taste.

Q: Good phrase. Did she get interested in substantive matters at all, or just as a sort of moral support?

RUSK: I never had any impression that Mrs. Johnson was interfering in foreign policy questions that she would inject herself into them. Now, what might have occurred in personal conversations the two of them might have had, I just don't know. But I never had the slightest indication that she was injecting herself into foreign policy questions. She was always extraordinarily helpful and when foreign visitors came to Washington, she was a good hostess to visiting VIP's. She was always a very agreeable guest when the President and she went on trips abroad. But she stayed pretty much out of the substance of matters as far as I could tell.

Q: In line with that, you made a few comments in the opening answer you gave that might be worth exploring a little bit more—the subject of Lyndon Johnson as a personal diplomat—in [your] opinion as a professional in that field. A lot was made about Mr. Johnson's style, and so on, perhaps offending the dignified foreign statesman—do you think that's an exaggeration again on the part of the critics?

RUSK: I think that's an exaggeration and is a part of that kind of press gossip that the press can't live without. I always found him very effective in his dealings with foreign leaders.

Q: That would apply to such instances as the famous confrontation with the Pakistani [Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and you mentioned the one with Home?

RUSK: Oh, President Johnson didn't give away American policy when he was talking with people with whom we have important differences. Bhutto was a very unreliable man, and we knew him to be an unreliable man. He was out to do the United States no good, so President Johnson wouldn't bow and scrape before people like that. In his discussions with Kosygin, he was very frank. They were brutally frank with each other. Nevertheless, President Johnson could put the case of the United States as effectively as I've ever heard it put with whatever audience he was dealing with in terms of foreign dignitaries.

Q: And he did his homework, in the sense that he mastered the detail necessary on the subject? I think you made reference to this.

RUSK: Yes. He followed foreign policy matters so intimately throughout the years that it was not a case of just getting him specially briefed up as though he had never heard of problems when he was dealing with a foreigner. He had special briefings prepared for him for each visit, of course—each visit that he made abroad—but they were briefings about matters with which he was already generally familiar.

Q: So he didn't have to start from scratch, as it were, to master them?

RUSK: That's right.

Q: Did he have any particular successes? Did he establish particular rapport with any foreign leaders so far as you understood?

RUSK: Well, I think one striking example was his relation with the President of Mexico. President Johnson took the view that this hemisphere is our home; this is where we live; these are our neighbors. If we can't get along with our neighbors, with whom can we get along? He set out to make a major effort to improve our relations with Mexico, and, in fact, our relations with Mexico during Lyndon Johnson's Presidency became better than they've ever been in our history. This included a warm and close personal relationship with the President of Mexico, and that was a notable example of what you're asking about. He did an especially good job in that relationship.

But, in general, he tried to treat other political leaders with consideration and courtesy and understanding and at the same time uphold American interests.

Q: I was going to ask—on the other side, were there any world leaders with whom he simply didn't get along? The names that come to mind, of course, without any thought, are U Thant and later on Harold Wilson.

RUSK: Well, it's true that he and U Thant were not soulmates, and that they had important differences. This was partly because President Johnson found U Thant to be unreliable. This always offended President Johnson when he found that other leaders were trying to take advantage of him, or to betray confidences, or to take unfair advantage in one situation or another. President Johnson always had difficulties with Prime Ministers of India, but that was partly because the Indians looked upon their relations with the United

States as a one-way street—that we were supposed to do a great deal for India and India was not prepared to do anything for the United States.

In general the President got along very well with foreign leaders. This was strikingly brought out during the Punta del Este summit meeting of the Presidents of the hemisphere. That was a great success in terms of President Johnson's own personal relationship with other political leaders in the Western Hemisphere. That showed the warmth of his attitude toward Latin America. He invested a great deal of effort in that meeting and went to particular pains to establish a personal relationship with all the Presidents and succeeded dramatically.

Q: He managed to treat, say, the Presidents of small, relatively insignificant, countries with the same regard that he would treat, say, the President of a major South American country?

RUSK: That's correct. He was always very considerate and thoughtful about the way he treated representatives of small countries.

Q: Would this apply even to one who was, maybe, giving him a little trouble, as in the case of Punta del Este, wasn't it Arosemena of Ecuador?

RUSK: President Johnson was very frank with him. He was considerate, but he was very frank. There were no punches pulled in their discussions. It was a good transaction.

Q: Did President Johnson change in any way the White House organization for national security affairs as compared with President Kennedy's national security operation in the White House?

RUSK: The principal change that President Johnson brought about was the institution of what came to be known as the “Tuesday Lunch.” There was in effect, an inner War Cabinet made up of the President and the Secretary of State and the Secretary of

Defense, usually the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the personal Assistant for National Security Affairs—first it would be McGeorge Bundy and then Walt Rostow—and with one or another staff officer along to take notes?

Q: You didn't mention the Director of the CIA?

RUSK: The director of the CIA was frequently there, yes. In the first place, President Johnson discovered that, at least, that group knew how to keep their mouths shut, whereas in a large meeting of the Cabinet or a large meeting of the National Security Council the chances for leaks to the outside were always present.He knew that he could talk in the most intimate way, the most provisional or tentative way, at that Tuesday Luncheon without having things leak out to the press. We transacted an enormous amount of business at that Tuesday Luncheon. Each one had its own agenda.

Q: Who prepared the agenda?

RUSK: Walt Rostow or McGeorge Bundy. There would be anywhere from two to ten items listed for discussion. We would bring to the meeting any particular papers we needed, or we would bring to it our own recommendations. We'd have a full discussion, and it was in a relaxed fashion. We could debate with each other, we could expose different points of view, we could look at all the alternatives, we could talk about the attitude of other personalities and individuals such as Senators or leading Congressmen. It was a most valuable institution and made a great difference to the ease of working relationships among those who were carrying the top responsibility.

Q: Were decisions generally made at that meeting, or just the discussion sort of carried on and then decisions arrived at a later time?

RUSK: No, many decisions were made. The Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, say Walt Rostow, would take notes on the decisions and then assist when we went back to our Departments, in giving effect to the decisions. He would de-brief one or two of my

colleagues on what was decided at the Tuesday Luncheon, and I would give my own instructions. Each one of us took notes on decisions made on matters for which we were responsible and went back to our Departments and put them into effect. This made it possible to deal with a great many questions orally rather than with elaborate papers, and to do so on the basis of full discussion of all the alternatives. I found that a most useful session. We transacted a lot of business there.

Q: You didn't find that it caused difficulties in understanding as to what had been decided. I mean, your notes didn't differ from, say Walt Rostow's or Secretary McNamara's?

RUSK: Well, we would frequently compare notes afterwards and if there were any differences of view as to what had actually bean decided, we'd always take it up with the President for clarification. But that seldom occurred because usually it would be quite clear at the table itself as to what was being decided.

Q: Do you know how detailed the records of those meetings were? You said there was somebody present to take notes.

RUSK: I think at the beginning the records were rather flimsy, and then the President realized that it would be extremely valuable to have a fairly full record of the Tuesday Luncheons, and he had Tom Johnson or somebody else present to take notes. And then Walt Rostow would also take notes, so the record became fuller as the Luncheons proceeded.

Q: How did that organization—that institution, as it were—compare to President Kennedy's Ex- com?

RUSK: Well, the Ex-com was a highly specialized ad hoc body to deal with one particular crisis.

Q: It operated only in the Cuban—?

RUSK: Only in the Cuban missile crisis.

Q: There was not a regular smaller-than-the-NSC group under Kennedy?

RUSK: No. President Kennedy frequently would meet with, say, Bob McNamara and myself on a particular matter. Secretary McNamara and I did not like, ourselves, to get into much discussion in the National Security Council or in Cabinet meetings with so many people sitting around the room. Most often we would see President Kennedy either just before or just after such a meeting where the real decision would be taken, so that the discussion in the National Security Council would be more restrictive and would not lend itself to leaks and to distortions by people sitting around the room.

Q: Having this ongoing thing, the Tuesday Lunch then, did that mean that President Johnson pretty well downgraded or ignored the NSC as a formal group?

RUSK: He had occasional meetings of the National Security Council, but the National Security Council doesn't really lend itself to the kind of full and free debate and discussion that is required for important decisions. In the first place there are too many people present_ There are fifteen to twenty people sitting around the room, and it's not good for a President and a Cabinet officer to debate each other in the presence of other people. There ought not to be any blue sky showing between the President and a Cabinet officer. If they engage in a debate before witnesses, then there's always the danger of its being leaked that somehow a Cabinet officer took another point of view whereas after a decision has been made, it is incumbent upon a Cabinet officer to support the decision made by the President regardless of what his own personal point of view had been in the course of making the decision. So, from that point of view, to me it is important that such differences be discussed very privately with the President and not in situations where leaks could occur.

Q: What was President Johnson's use of the White House operation—the Bundy shop, first, and then the Rostow—was it de-emphasized as compared to Kennedy's use of it?

RUSK: No. That function is indispensable to a President partly because there's such a mass of business that i? is important to have, right at the President's elbow, some staff who can help manage the flow of papers. Every day the Department of State would send over to the White House at least a half a dozen papers requiring the President's decision or requiring his attention. Now, the Secretary of State can't spend all of his time running back and forth between his office and the White House to deal with this paperwork himself with the President, so these would go over to Walt Rostow.

Walt Rostow would then arrange a time to get in to see the President and put them before him or put them in his evening reading and get a notation back as to the President's wishes in the matter. So that in the first instance, just the management of business required that there be a staff of that sort.

Then each President has his own way of expressing himself and his own way of operating. It is almost impossible for another Department to produce finished products for the President in terms of statements, speeches, official communications in the President's own name; so that the staff there would be very useful in redrafting messages and speeches and statements and in helping the President prepare himself for press conferences and things of that sort.

Now, where such a staff could cause trouble would be in coming between the President and a Cabinet officer without the Cabinet officer's knowledge. Walt Rostow and Mac Bundy were very good about that. If they had any thoughts that they wanted to inject into a policy discussion and they wanted to put them before the President, they would also inform the Cabinet officer so that the Cabinet officer would have a chance to comment on those proposals from his own point of view. President Johnson was very good about not allowing his own personal staff to come between him and a Cabinet officer. In that respect

he was somewhat different from President Kennedy who would let that happen from time to time.

Q: You didn't get the impression maybe that the Bundy-Rostow subordinates were going around you on certain occasions? You said that Mr. Johnson was very good about not going around you, but what about the people at maybe the second level in the White House national security operation?

RUSK: No, because those fellows were usually drawn into discussions. You'd have a man there working on financial matters, and we'd bring him in when monetary questions were up. Another man would be working on Vietnam; we'd bring him into the Vietnamese discussions. They usually were parts of the various task forces that were working on individual subjects, so that their views were pretty well known to the rest of us at all times anyhow because they were working parts of the machinery of policy formulation.

Q: And they didn't try to predetermine the State Department's viewpoint by disclosing a White House viewpoint or anything of this nature?

RUSK: Well, when one talks about a White House viewpoint, one has to be clear about whether one is talking about the President, or somebody else. My view always was that unless the President himself was speaking, I was the White House. When somebody would call, as occasionally happened at a staff level, and say to one of the members of my own staff, “The White House want this” or, “The White House wants that,” I would always want to know whether that meant that the President wanted it because no one speaks for the President except the President—unless it be the Secretary of State on foreign policy matters.

Q: So you don't think your subordinates had any trouble distinguishing what was the view of the President?

RUSK: I don't think so.

Q: Do you think that the staff over there ever acted—?

RUSK: No, let it be said that they had some extraordinarily competent people on that staff over there, and that you were glad to get their help most of the time, because they had ideas to contribute and they had judgments to contribute. So there was a pretty good working relationship between the national security staff and the Departments of State and Defense.

Q: Then you don't think that they ever acted to, say, block out the views of the Department to the President in any way?

RUSK: No, I'm sure that didn't happen.

Q: Did the operation over there change substantially as between McGeorge Bundy and Walt Rostow?

RUSK: No, I didn't detect any particular change. McGeorge Bundy was a somewhat more skillful draftsman than Walt Rostow. Walt Rostow, at the beginning anyhow was a little prolific in his words, was not as succinct as McGeorge Bundy. But Walt Rostow improved greatly in that respect and got to be a very efficient special assistant in all respects.

Q: What about the rest of the White House staff under Mr. Johnson, the staff that wasn't associated specifically with national security affairs? What brings this to mind is a recent article relative to Vietnam by Norman Cousins [Look, July 29, 1969] in which he mentions his contacts being [Bill] Moyers and [Jack] Valenti, who were hardly NSC-type staff men. Did they meddle—the non-national security staff?

RUSK: That would usually come about in speech-writing. We always had a chance to look at the drafts of speeches and make suggestions on them and look at final drafts and check anything there that ought not to be said or make suggestions about what ought to be said.

Moyers was occasionally at the Tuesday luncheons and took part in the discussion along with everybody else, but I didn't get any sense of interference. They handled themselves with correctness, I think.

Q: You have mentioned several times and more or less anticipated this line of questioning —the relationship between your Department of State and the other departments, particularly the Department of Defense. Frequently the critics make the point that Defense was taking over initiatives in foreign policy, and so on. Do you think this was both exaggerated and done basically on your agreement with Secretary McNamara which you said you frequently reached?

RUSK: When Secretary McNamara and I took office under President Kennedy, we met with each other and I said to him that the safety of the American people is a primary object of foreign policy; therefore, I, myself, as Secretary of State, would be interested in national security. He said to me that the primary mission of the Department of Defense was to support the foreign policy of the United States, and we agreed that we would do everything that we could to establish close working-relationships between our two Departments. For example, we encouraged contacts at all levels between our Departments—between the majors and the desk officers, and the lieutenant colonels and the office directors, and people like that. I am proud of the fact that during the Kennedy-Johnson years an inquisitive and suspicious press was not able to generate any impressions of feud between the Department of State and the Department of Defense. This is because the two Secretaries insisted that it be that way, and that there not be running feuds.

Another factor that made a difference was that the State Department now has over three hundred officers who are graduates of the war colleges, and the Defense Department has at least that many officers who graduated from various training programs in the Department of State, so that there is a broadening of the understanding of the other fellow's problems.

Q: On both sides.

RUSK: That doesn't mean that you come to automatic agreement on every question, but you at least understand better than was true in the early days what the other fellow's problem was.

Q: Did your agreement in regard to that particular problem with Defense extend similarly over into Mr. [Clark] Clifford's tenure? The press did try to promote a feud there, I think, toward the end.

RUSK: Well, that came about at the very end when some of the civilians in the Defense Department tried to stir up a campaign against decisions taken by President Johnson, and that was primarily responsible for that flurry of press speculation at the very end there. So it did not work quite as well under Clark Clifford as it had worked under Robert McNamara.

Q: What about Mr. Johnson's fairly well-known habit of consulting people outside government? Did that ever cause trouble for those of you he charged with the responsibility of major decisions?

RUSK: No President should restrict himself in terms of ideas or sources of advice. A President ought to be free to consult anybody that he wants to outside the Department—his chauffeur, anybody at all, Congressmen, Senators. All Presidents are going to do that, and it's a part of the means by which a President can try to cover every point and be sure that something is not being overlooked that he ought to have in his mind. Now, that is a part of the President's own mind, and that is something that I think is entirely appropriate and never caused any special problems because these matters had to be dealt with on their merits, and people in government have no particular monopoly of ideas.

Q: Of course, those people are not reading the traffic in foreign affairs-

RUSK: Well, they may have good ideas even though they don't read the traffic. I never had any problems about that myself.

Q: What about the administration of the State Department? Was President Johnson interested at all in that aspect of your job?

RUSK: Not in detail. He delegated that responsibility; and I, in turn, delegated that largely to the Under Secretary and the Deputy Under Secretary for Administration. The President was, of course, very much interested in Presidential appointees, and we had up to two hundred Presidential appointments in the Department of State if you include all the Ambassadors. But he did not try to tell the Department of State how to run itself any more than he did other Departments.

Q: Was the chief initiative as far as administration the SIG-IRG initiative of '69?

RUSK: No, that was not primarily on administrative questions. The SIG-IRG organization was for the consideration of policy matters.

Q: And for interdepartmental coordination. Was that President Johnson's initiative or yours?

RUSK: I think it came up from a study that Mr. [Nicholas] Katzenbach had done about how we might improve the machinery. As a matter of fact, we never gave that a full tryout because it was getting a slow start by the time the Administration came to an end.

Q: But Mr. Johnson didn't take any direct interest in that mechanical-type thing?

RUSK: No, he was interested in the final product, but he did not inject himself into the process.

Q: You mentioned ambassadorial appointments and, of course, other appointments as well—of Assistant Secretaries and others that are Presidential. Did Mr. Johnson pay what

you thought was due weight to your recommendations on those matters, or sometimes go around you for his own political needs?

RUSK: It depends on what you mean by due weight. After all, these are Presidential appointments, and they're not appointments of the Secretary of State. My general habit was to recommend professional officers as frequently as possible because, in the first place, I myself had no coterie of friends or people that I had wanted to bring into government with me, or anything of that sort. President Johnson would take most of those. He had about seventy percent career Ambassadors during his Presidency, but he also had other people that he wanted to put into ambassadorial posts for political or other reasons. I understood that myself and expected that some of my recommendations would not be accepted and that names that I would not myself have put forward would in fact have been appointed, but that's par for the course. That's going to happen with any Administration, any Secretary of State.

Q: And that applies as well to the Assistant Secretaryships and things within the Department as well as to ambassadors?

RUSK: Not so much to Assistant Secretaryships where the President was much more inclined to take the recommendation of the Secretary of State, and that would be true with the other departments as well. He tended to give the Cabinet officers an extra amount of weight in determining who their own colleagues would be.

Q: Did that viewpoint of yours that career people perhaps should be moved into ambassadorial positions have any effect on Mr. Johnson? Did he have a strong bias for or against the professional service that he ever indicated to you?

RUSK: Well, he always had a little reservation because he knew that a professional officer would not be a Lyndon Johnson man in the strict sense of the term—in the sense of personal commitment—because a professional officer is not supposed to be personally committed to a particular Administration in a political sense. The President was impatient,

for example, because he did not believe that some of our Ambassadors in Latin America were putting forth Lyndon B. Johnson as the President of the United States—were still working in the general atmosphere of the Kennedy Administration. An Ambassador is the alter-ego of the President. He's the President's personal representative to a foreign country, and the President felt that an Ambassador—and I agree with him on this—that an Ambassador should, in the first instance, be the best representative of the man who is the President of the United States that he can possibly be. I once talked to the head of the British Civil Service, and I complimented him on the way in which the British Civil Service seemed to stay outside of politics. He said, “Oh, no, you've got it wrong. The British Civil Service gives its full support to one administration at a time.”

Q: There's a difference between that and being out of politics.

RUSK: That's right, so there were times when President Johnson, as any President, would become impatient with particular Ambassadors on points of that sort.

Q: But he didn't let it color his view toward the professional service?

RUSK: No, I don't think so. Any new President comes in with a certain arms-length attitude toward the Foreign Service, but the more he stays in office the more he realizes that this is a great professional service with a lot of talent in it, and he gets to be more respectful of the Foreign Service as he goes along.

Q: The press consensus grew to be that under you and under President Johnson the role of planning in the State Department was de-emphasized substantially. Do you think that is true, and if so was it your initiative or his that caused that change?

RUSK: Quite the contrary. My view is that every policy officer is a planner. Every desk officer, every policy officer up and down the line should be thinking in longer range terms about his job and what the future holds. Everybody should plan. I did not believe that you should concentrate planning just in something called the Policy Planning Staff. I

considered myself a planner, and I expected every junior officer in the Department to be a planner as far as his own job was concerned. You can't separate plans and operations in any distinct sense because everything you do has to do with your future plans, and everything you do ought to be done in relation to what outcome you want in the long run. Now, there is a limit beyond which you can do planning in the long range sense because you can't see that far ahead. The unexpected is always interjecting itself, and the situation that you might look upon today will be quite different a year from now or two years from now; and your plans, if they become too hard and solidified, will be irrelevant. So this is a process and not something that can be put into one basket named planning but it's something that everybody has to be involved with.

Q: The tenure that you served saw two major reorganizations of functions sort of loosely under the State Department—AID and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Did Mr. Johnson use those agencies as parts and arms of the State Department as they were set up, or did he deal with them independently?

RUSK: Both these agencies took their policy guidance from the Secretary of State. They're set up that way, and although President Johnson would deal directly on occasion with the Administrator of AID and on occasion with the Director of the Disarmament Agency, the policies involved were handled as though these agencies were parts of the Department of State.

Q: That didn't cause any trouble? The organization of those was satisfactory as far as you were concerned?

RUSK: That's right. There was no problem on that.

Q: Some of this on decision-making you've anticipated, but some not. When you talked awhile ago about yourself and Mr. McNamara, for example, coordinating your decision

before you sent it to the President, the implication could be drawn from that, I suppose, that Mr. Johnson didn't get a chance to hear all sides. I take it you'd think that was unfair-

RUSK: No. Secretary McNamara and I accepted the responsibility for exposing to the President the alternatives and the different points of view. If the other points of view were not sufficiently put forward, the President would on occasion appoint a devil's advocate for the purpose of presenting another point of view.

Q: Specifically as a Devil's Advocate?

RUSK: Yes. He used George Ball in that connection, for example, on a number of occasions; there were times when he would actually organize a little debate in front of himself with staff officers taking part. He would assign a staff officer the task of presenting a particular point of view and another staff officer the task of presenting another point of view, and he'd have a little debate in front of himself.

Q: And everybody knew that they had been assigned that job?

RUSK: That's right.

Q: So that if someone was playing the Devil's Advocate contrary to his own inclinations, that would be a known situation?

RUSK: Oh, the President never, never objected to people putting forward views that were contrary to his own inclinations in the course of making a decision. He wanted all points of view brought forward, and any wise person who was dealing with policy matters would insist upon that in any event. We used to do that at the Department of State. After the decision was made, the President expected his colleagues to support the decision.

Q: How did you personally render your advice to the President? You mentioned in connection with Kennedy that sometimes you'd stop prior to the NSC meeting and render

your advice because you didn't want to expose it. Did you do the same thing with Mr. Johnson?

RUSK: I saw President Johnson usually several times a week, certainly at the Tuesday Lunch and then many other times during the course of the week. And we were on the phone with each other. There were many ways in which we could do it. We could do it by paper, by sending over memoranda; we could do it on the telephone; we could do it in personal conversation. So there was a constant flow of thoughts back and forth between the two of us on a wide range of questions.

Q: But privately, invariably?

RUSK: Privately, except in the case of papers. There would be others who would know about the papers.

Q: But you never felt that you had trouble getting your advice to him in some way that didn't expose any differences that you might have to others?

RUSK: No. The President would frequently want to be sure that when a paper came over, it was my paper. Sometimes you'd send over a paper, say, from Mr. Ben Read, who was the head of the Secretariat in the Department of State, to Mr. McGeorge Bundy or to Mr. Walt Rostow. On the face of it it would not show whether or not I personally had seen the paper and had concurred in it. He rather took the view that if it's anything that's worth the attention of the President, its worth the attention of the Secretary of State. So once in awhile he would send a question back as to whether I had myself seen the paper, and whether it was my paper or whether it was just a staff paper. But the channels of communication were wide open, and they were used a great deal and in a variety of ways.

Q: Were important decisions—it's awfully hard to escape from using Vietnam as an example sometimes, although that's not the subject today—decisions such as, for example, to begin the bombing of the north—would a decision like that be taken in very

explicit and in very clear terms, or were they sort of slipped into as sort of reactions to events?

RUSK: No, any major decision of that sort would be taken in the most solemn fashion.

Q: And very clearly and definitely?

RUSK: That's right. Never any ambiguity about starting the bombing, or stopping the bombing, or bombing pauses, or negotiating moves. You see, as far as Vietnam is concerned, President Johnson was his own desk officer. He was actually the Commander-in-Chief. This was a great preoccupation with him so that every detail of the Vietnam matter was a matter of information to the President, and the decisions on Vietnam were taken by the President.

Q: The reason I pursue that is because there have been criticisms that the practice of keeping one's options open sometimes led to what amounted to vacillations in the sense that no clear, firm decision was really ever taken in some instances. But you disagree with this?

RUSK: Well, if no decisions were taken, that meant that nothing would be done, and doing nothing is itself an important decision. There were times when we would take another week or ten days before we would take a particular action because we wanted to think it over more and feel out the situation a bit more, but this was not an accidental lack of clarity. It was a deliberate decision to postpone.

Q: Which, as you say, is a decision in itself.

RUSK: Yes.

Q: What role did the President play, or did Mr. Johnson play, in a time of absolute crisis, say, like the June war of 1967, for example. Did he stay in more-or-less constant communication with you, for example, during that period—on the spot, personal interest?

RUSK: Yes. At moments of great crisis, the President would put an enormous amount of time in on the crisis itself. This would be true whether it was the June War between Israel and their Arab neighbors, or the Soviet move into Czechoslovakia, or any major new move as far as Vietnam was concerned. The President would give whatever time was necessary.

Q: He more or less manned the operation room himself?

RUSK: That's in effect exactly what would happen.

Q: So you didn't have trouble finding him or getting to him in moments of crisis?

RUSK: Dean Acheson once said that in a relation between a President and a Secretary of State it is important that both understand which is President. Now, President Johnson never had any doubt about who was President, not did I.

Q: That makes for a pretty good working relationship in all kinds of areas.

The press was very fond, and analysts of various kinds were very fond, of dividing Mr. Johnson's advisers into clearly labeled groups—the most famous being “hawks” and “doves.” During your tenure in the Department of State, is it true that various departments —State, Defense, or others—fall into clearly definable postures over a period of time that can be talked about in a labeled way like that?

RUSK: Not really. In general, I think the attitude of the Joint Chiefs of Staff can be more or less predictable from a point of view of solely military analysis, but that would not be true of the Defense Department as such, including the Secretary of Defense. Now, one

of the reasons why people get branded is that they're speaking to different audiences. Secretary McNamara was talking to the Armed Services Committees. Therefore, he, in trying to defend the moderate and middle position of the Administration, sounded like a dove; whereas I was talking to the Foreign Relations Committee where, in defending the moderate, middle position, I sounded like a hawk. It depends upon your audience as to how it appears to be.

Q: That's a distinction I haven't ever heard before, and sounds like a very valid one.

RUSK: McNamara and I would probably be saying exactly the same thing, but because of the difference in the audience it sounded different.

Q: And would be written up differently.

RUSK: And would be written up differently.

Q: I think it's Moyers who has been quoted as saying that by the end of 1965 the government was more or less bitterly divided over the Vietnam policy. Did you think that was true?

RUSK: No, I didn't find that to be the case.

Q: Did it ever get that way?

RUSK: Not so far as I know. We came close to that during the Clifford period—at the very end of the Clifford period—but that never manifested itself in clear recommendations from Clark Clifford that we pursue a radically different course. This was just a case of growing ulcers and worrying about it, not really coming forward with specific proposals. Plus Clifford, for example, as Secretary of Defense, did not make the proposal that he made just recently in his Foreign Affairs article. [July, 1969]

Q: Was it possible to make such proposals? Could those who dissented from a policy after it was made get more than a pro forma hearing? You said they could send a memo up but couldn't get any conversation. How, then, do you get a policy change under those circumstances?

RUSK: It's always possible to put in a proposal to change what we are doing, but there were times when the President would simply look around the room and say, “Now, gentlemen, I'm not going to do this so just don't fret me about this, because I'm not going to do it.” That would put an end to that kind of discussion for awhile.

Q: So that would close out, at least for the time, any change, but it would have been preceded by consideration.

RUSK: That's right. I never felt that I was inhibited in any way from going to the President and making to him any proposal that I had on my mind.

Q: That's fairly clear. Why do you think that Mr. Johnson never either agreed to, or allowed his subordinates such as yourself, to really go out and sell the Vietnam policy?

RUSK: Oh, I don't think that he imposed limitations on us in that regard. I made more speeches than any Secretary of State.

Q: At his instructions?

RUSK: Well, with his knowledge and consent. I did a good deal of that on my own. What we did not do was to take steps to create a war psychology in the United States.

Q: I guess that's what I meant.

RUSK: Now, that was an important decision. It was not made all at once, but it was a matter that we talked about on a number of occasions. We did not lay on big military

parades. We did not put on big bond drives or [have] movie actors going around the country whooping up war-fever, and things of that sort.

The reason we didn't was because there's too much power in the world to let the American people become too mad. Public opinion could get out of hand if you went too far down that trail, and with nuclear weapons lying around it's better not to have that happen.

One of the important things to reflect upon, as far as Vietnam is concerned, is that we were trying to do a kind of police job to fend off this aggression against South Vietnam, but to do it calmly and, in effect, in cold blood. Our objective was peace. It was not to let the situation go down the chute—the chute into a larger war. Some day we'll have to evaluate whether that decision was right.

Q: But it was a clear-cut decision not to take this kind of action?

RUSK: That's right.

Q: And Mr. Johnson participated?

RUSK: That's right.

Q: That was what I meant by selling, I guess.

RUSK: We did not go out to whip up the anger of the American people over Vietnam. In retrospect that needs examination. It might be that we should have done more of that than we did, but we deliberately did not do that.

Q: Once the dissenters became vocal and fairly numerous, you acted frequently as the Administration spokesman to them. Did you find that you could reach them at all—that they'd listen, even?

RUSK: Well, some would; some would not. Some people had the view that somehow the United States unilaterally could make peace in Vietnam, regardless of what Hanoi did. That on the face of it is an absurdity, but it's not apparent as an absurdity to some critics. We never really were able to get North Vietnam seriously interested in sitting down and making peace in that situation, and the present Administration has not yet been able t o do that either. But we had very little pressure during the Johnson Administration to withdraw from Vietnam, regardless of the consequences. We can get into this later in discussing Vietnam.

Q: Did the dissenters have the knowledge to be responsible; or did they act frequently out of simply not having the classified material available to them that might have changed their minds?

RUSK: Well, a good deal of it was wishful thinking, hoping that somehow the problem would just go away if we got out of it—that maybe Laos and Vietnam and Cambodia and Thailand would survive whether we did anything about it or not; that Ho Chi Minh was just a good old Nationalist and that all he was wanting to do was to set up a kind of Yugoslavia out there, free from China, and free from the Soviet Union. A lot of wishful thinking of that sort that entered into some people's consideration of the matter.

Q: It was not a matter of you having possession of certain secret information that led you to one conclusion and the dissenters not having it?

RUSK: No. The basic facts on which opinion could be formed were well-known to the public, and there were very few secrets that had any direct bearing on the major decisions affecting the war.

Let's bear in mind that there are some specifically organized groups who are committed to opposing what we are doing in Vietnam. The Communists are very active, working through innocent organizations. The confirmed pacifists like the Quakers, for whom I have the

highest regard, are going to oppose something like Vietnam, just as they opposed the war in Korea, and just as they've opposed other things. So some of this is highly organized.

Then as the war dragged on, and it was a slow-bleed, there was no clear indication that the war was going to come to a finite conclusion. So some people just got weary of the war and wanted to bring it to an end and to bring the casualties to an end, and that led them to embrace points of view that in calmer moments they would not have embrace.

Q: Did the press contribute, you think, importantly to this wishful thinking atmosphere, or this irresponsibility of viewpoint?

RUSK: Some elements in the press, the New York Times, for example. I sent the New York Times a copy of the editorial which they had written at the time of the conclusion of the SEATO Treaty. On that occasion they said that the SEATO Treaty was a great diplomatic triumph for President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles. I got back a tortured thirty-page memorandum from them trying to explain that what they were saying in 1967 and '68 was consistent with what they had said back when the SEATO Treaty was formed.

Q: But you think there was a real element in the Eastern press that was particularly critical in this regard? Was it partly the Eastern press's disillusion with Johnsonian style that led them. This is kind of confused in my own mind here, what I'm trying to ask—

RUSK: I think some of it was just confusion among the editorial boards of some of the newspapers. I think it was confusion in the New York Times, for example. They never laid out clearly what their major premises were. Now, Senator [Wayne] Morse would get up on the Senate floor and say that Southeast Asia is not worth the life of a single American soldier.

Q: That's clear enough.

RUSK: I disagreed with him, but I respected his saying that because then you would know how to read other things that he was saying about Vietnam. The New York Times would never lay out clearly its major premises about Vietnam. It didn't say that it wanted to withdraw regardless of the consequences, but intermediate steps which it would support were simply steps in that direction.

Q: Favoring policies without consideration of outcome?

RUSK: That's right.

Q: One other matter that is in this general area of organization and administration and personal relations is in regard to messages. You've said a couple of things about this—that the White House staff perhaps prepared the wording usually. Did the Department have its say in major foreign policy addresses adequately?

RUSK: Yes, I think so. This is one job that the Department of State is not very good at. We have very poor speechwriters in the Department of State. I asked the Inspection Corps once in their visits around the world inspecting our Embassies abroad to keep their eyes and ears open for articulate people—people that knew how to express themselves orally or in writing—in order to try to get more help in this regard, but we never succeeded. I only had mediocre success in getting real help in writing my own speeches so a good deal of the burden fell on people like Harry McPherson over in the White House in actually drafting final texts. That, to a degree, is going to be inevitable anyhow because someone who is at the right hand of the President can have a chance to slip in and talk to the President about various ideas and methods and ways of saying things, and sort of draw the President into the actual preparation of draft speeches. Had we had greater competence in the Department of State, the President would have been glad to absorb as much as we could have produced for him in that regard, but we just weren't very good at it.

Q: Were there particular speeches on foreign policy matters that are well-known in which the State Department had a specifically important initiative, in either causing the speech, or that you were responsible for the nature of the viewpoint in it? I'm thinking of things like the U.N. speech in late 1963, or the State of the Union in 1964, or Johns Hopkins, or [the] San Antonio formula—?

RUSK: We would always put raw material into such speeches. Of course there were a number of occasions where we would recommend that the President appear and make a speech, such as at the U.N. We would send over, frequently, statements to be used in press conferences or to be used as White House releases—statements on particular subjects—and many of those were used as we sent them over with only minor modification. But, generally speaking, President Johnson's speeches were determined by his own judgment as to where he wanted to go, and with whom he wanted to meet, and when he wanted to go, and generally what he wanted to talk about.

Q: This exhausts the categories that I knew enough to include in this general subject category. Do you know of others that we haven't talked about? I don't want to cut you off on this general area of consideration.

RUSK: No.

(Interview continues, September 26, 1969)

RUSK: Why don't we talk for awhile and then stop and see where we are?

Q: That's fine. I suppose the best way is just to get into the outline, the parts where you indicate you have recollections. I think it's useful to get some of the background although it's not directly in the Johnson Administration. How much was Mr. Johnson involved in the decisions that you know about before he was President?

RUSK: Is that running?

Q: It is now. I was just indicating that—perhaps as useful background, even though it's in the Kennedy Administration—you were of course involved in Vietnam from a very early time, and I'd like to get some indication as to how much Mr. Johnson as Vice President was involved during that period.

RUSK: Well, in the first place, he was kept fully informed about everything that was happening in Vietnam. He attended the National Security Council meetings and Cabinet meetings, and he had a State Department officer on his staff who kept him briefed on the daily reports from Vietnam. So I would say that he had full information. He did make a trip to Vietnam, as you will recall, and the historian will have a chance to read his full report on that trip.

Q: Did you talk to him about that trip?

RUSK: I talked to him about it after he came back. He was briefed on it before he left. I was present when he reported on his trip to President Kennedy, but I think it would not be correct to say that Vice President Johnson participated in the detailed decisions that were made by President Kennedy on Vietnam unless President Kennedy talked to him privately about them because the key decisions were made not at formal meetings but informally by President Kennedy in consultation with his key advisers.

Q: And Mr. Johnson was usually not present at that.

RUSK: He was not regularly present at those special meetings that were called.

Now the most important decision that President Kennedy made was to go beyond the levels of troops that were in effect permitted by the 1954 agreements, and greatly to augment our advisory position in South Vietnam. Under the Geneva Agreements the French had been permitted to leave about six hundred and fifty people in South Vietnam as a military assistance group. By agreement with the French, we later substituted Americans for those French, and so we had about six hundred and fifty people there who

were ordnance people, and quartermaster people, and signal people, who were there to advise on the use and employment of American equipment that was being supplied under the military assistance program. It became apparent to President Kennedy that that much effort was not going to be nearly enough to do the job, and so he greatly increased the advisory role out there and moved the complement to about seventeen- or eighteen thousand before his death.

Any historian will want to look carefully at what President Kennedy said on the public record about Southeast Asia. You will find a great deal of material in the three volumes of the public papers of President Kennedy. There is no question that he felt very strongly that it was vital to the security of the United States that Southeast Asia be maintained as a free area, that it not be allowed to be overrun by the Communists. That was his policy, and some of the so-called Kennedy people who have tried to portray President Kennedy in a different role just missed the point. I'm not a ghoul, [and] I'm not going to dig President Kennedy out of the grave as a witness to later policy, but I think the historian will want to look carefully at what President Kennedy said publicly while he was President in order to make judgments about what President Kennedy's policy towards Southeast Asia was.

Q: You are saying that the commitment was as firm as it ever had been or could be at the time the Administration changed in late 1963?

RUSK: Yes. President Kennedy made the determination that I think any President would have made, that it was necessary for the United States to make good on its commitment to South Vietnam. Every President since President Truman had come to the conclusion that the security of Southeast Asia was vital to the security of the United States; that if Southeast Asia with its peoples and its vast resources were to be organized by elements hostile to the United States that would create an adverse and major change in the world balance of power; and that it was in the interest of the United States to maintain the independence of these Southeast Asian countries, particularly those covered by the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization.

So when President Johnson became President, he found seventeen- or eighteen thousand Americans in Vietnam under a policy which was clearly aimed at maintaining the independence of South Vietnam and Laos and Cambodia and Thailand. Now, the question arises as to whether President Johnson could have changed that policy. As Vice President he was certainly loyal to the policy of President Kennedy. There was no question about that. In a purely constitutional sense President Johnson might have been able to reverse course-

Q: But he would have had to do it against—I take it—the more or less unanimous advice of his advisers.

RUSK: There was no advice to President Johnson from any of his advisers that we cut and run in Southeast Asia. President Johnson took office determined to carry out the main policies of President Kennedy. He did that both in domestic and foreign affairs.

In another sense the President would find it difficult, if not impossible, to change a commitment of that sort. When you look at the consequences of cutting and running, the consequence is such that no President is likely to be able to accept. Not only would Southeast Asia be overrun, but the fidelity of the United States under its security treaties all over the world would be brought into question. In Asia we have treaties with Korea, Japan, the Republic of China, the Philippines, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand. If those who would become our enemies made the judgment that our participation in those treaties was merely a bluff, then those treaties would have no deterrent effect.

Q: Which is one of their chief purposes.

RUSK: That's quite correct, and the effect would be that there would be those who would be tempted to move into areas which were covered by our treaty commitments elsewhere. To give one or two examples, in June 1961 Chairman Khrushchev produced a crisis on Berlin in his meeting with President Kennedy in Vienna in June. Chairman Khrushchev

in effect said to President Kennedy, 'We're going to turn East Berlin over to the East Germans, and you've got to work out problems of access and the presence of U.S. troops in Berlin with the East Germans." The implication was that the East Germans would not permit us to maintain our forces there, and Chairman Khrushchev said that any attempt by the United States to use force against the East Germans would mean war. President Kennedy had to look him straight in the eye and say, 'Well, then there will be war, Mr. Chairman. This is going to be a very cold winter." Now, it was of the utmost importance that Chairman Khrushchev believe President Kennedy on that point; otherwise, there might well have been a war.

Coming later to the Cuban missile crisis, President Kennedy had to say to Chairman Khrushchev, 'Wow, Mr. Chairman, those missiles must leave Cuba. We'd prefer that they leave by peaceful means, but they must leave." Now, suppose Chairman Khrushchev had said to President Kennedy, or had thought in his own mind, "Don't kid me, Mr. President. I know that your principal newspapers and your key Senators will collapse when I put on the pressure." That's a very good way to have war.

The credibility of the President of the United States at a moment of crisis and the fidelity of the United States to its security treaties are both of the utmost importance in maintaining peace in the world. The idea in the minds of leaders in Moscow and (n Peking that they had better be careful because those fool Americans just might do something about it is one of the principal pillars of peace in the world. So the issue in Southeast Asia is not just Vietnam, it's not even just Southeast Asia. It has to do with the maintenance of peace in a system in which the United States has security treaties with more than forty nations.

Q: The world system—

RUSK: So that any decision by President Johnson in 1963 or '64 to abandon South east Asia would have been a decision to abandon the fidelity of the United States under its

commitments, and this would have been a very grave thing—not only in Southeast Asia, but in the general world situation.

Q: Was there any advice at that time that you could have maybe the best of both worlds and honor your commitments and not cut and run, but still not invest any more resources in the position we were trying to hold there? Was there a middle-ground that was an option, even at that time?

RUSK: The historian is going to want to make some judgments about the problem of timing in using our forces in Southeast Asia, this question of gradualism. Basically we were on the strategic defensive in Southeast Asia. All we were trying to do was to deny to North Vietnam its effort to seize South Vietnam by force. Tactically in given local situations we took the offensive, but strategically all we were trying to do was to prevent something. We therefore responded to what North Vietnam was doing. President Kennedy put in an increased number of advisers, hoping that those would be able to overcome the effect of the North Vietnamese personnel that were being infiltrated into the South. Then after our election of 1964, North Vietnam began to send major units of its regular army into South Vietnam so that-

Q: There's no question about that unit infiltration?

RUSK: No, no question about it at all. Not only were they eventually picked up on the ground and identified, but we had intercept material indicating that they were on the way.

Q: This was as early as, you said, right after our election so-

RUSK: We began to get information about the movement of these units in December and January after our election.

Coming back to the point of gradualism—looking back on it the question arises as to whether we might have prevented further North Vietnamese efforts against South

Vietnam had we put in more troops sooner. For example, if President Kennedy had put in one hundred thousand men in 1962 as soon as it was discovered that the Laos Agreement of 1962 was not going to work, or had done it in 1963, it's just possible that that demonstration of substantial force at a very early stage would have caused North Vietnam to pause and decide that the Americans really were serious. But the gradual response left it open to North Vietnam to speculate that if they just did a little bit more, they'd be able to overcome what the Americans were willing to do. We followed the policy of gradualism in terms of responding to what North Vietnam was doing partly because we didn't want a larger war ourselves, partly because we were on the strategic defensive and were therefore responding to what the North was doing, partly because we did not wish to stimulate China and the Soviet Union into decisions which might have led to some active intervention on their part. We were trying to maintain this as a war that would not go beyond Vietnam, you see. But this is a judgment that the historian will have to make.

Q: Did the fact that we had an election in 1964 and that Mr. Johnson was terribly concerned and distracted by that perhaps make it difficult for him to give the attention to Vietnam that first year that might have produced a different result had he had the time and the concentration to do it?

RUSK: No, he gave full attention to Vietnam during the campaign and in the period just after the campaign. There was never any inattention on his part. What he was doing during that period was, in effect, coasting along on the decisions that had been made by President Kennedy. The level of forces did not begin to increase significantly until the spring of 1965.

There is one very interesting point about our elections of '64. Again, the historian will want to look into this, particularly if he can get any information available out of North Vietnam. President Johnson, although reaffirming our commitments throughout his campaign in 1964, made it clear that we were not interested in a larger war. Barry Goldwater, his opposition candidate, talked as though he wanted to make it into a larger war in order to

get it over with. Johnson won. It's entirely possible that the fellows in Hanoi said, 'aha, Johnson has won the election. He says he doesn't want a larger war. This means that we can have a larger war without an increase in risk." It was after our election and before the starting of the bombing of North Vietnam that North Vietnam began to send the regular units of its own army into South Vietnam. The 304th Division, for example, was started out for the South very soon after our election, so we've sometimes speculated as to-whether Hanoi misinterpreted the election of 1964 and thought that they could therefore increase their forces without running the risk of increasing the United States forces.

Q: Although that had come after the Tonkin attack when we'd demonstrated our policy of retaliation before the election.

RUSK: Yes, but they might have decided that that was an isolated episode and that this was not a matter of general policy, because there were some other attacks that had not led to retaliation.

Q: Right. And that was one of the questions I wanted to ask you. Was there a reason why we followed a policy of retaliation at Tonkin, and then at Bien Hoa and other instances we didn't do so?

RUSK: Well, I think that the main difference was that in the Tonkin Gulf incident there were attacks on American ships on the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin and the issue there was whether or not—

Q: There wasn't any question of the facts? I don't mean to interrupt you, but the facts were quite clear with the people who were considering the policy that this had in fact happened?

RUSK: I never had any doubts about the facts. Certainly, no one has seriously challenged the first attack. There has been some doubt cast on the second attack. But the commander of the ship and all the intervening commanders had no doubt about it, and I was impressed with the intercept material which we picked up from North Vietnam

because my impression at the time was that North Vietnam had no doubt about the fact that they were attacking these ships, you see. And they were the ones who would have the best means of knowing.

Q: The critics have made a point of what our ships were doing there, supporting apparently covert operations by the South Vietnamese. Had the policy—or allowing or ordering that support—been discussed at the Cabinet-level?

RUSK: These vessels were not there in support of any coastal operations by the South Vietnamese. They were not there in that role. They were there on missions that were more like the Pueblo mission. They were on an independent intelligence-gathering mission in the Gulf of Tonkin. Of course, since it was high seas we expected to maintain our capability of being present in the Gulf of Tonkin, and we weren't going to be driven off the high seas in the Gulf of Tonkin just because of a scrap going on in South Vietnam. But it is not true—and Secretary McNamara testified to this—that these vessels of ours were there covering or, in a sense, associated with some South Vietnamese coastal operation.

You see there had been a little guerilla war going along on the coast back and forth across the DMZ between the North Vietnamese and the South Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese were using coastal waters for infiltrating men and arms into the South, and the South Vietnamese were retaliating. But the destroyers that were attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin were not there to give cover to operations of that sort.

Q: Was this policy of retaliation already decided upon prior to its event, or was it one that you met and decided upon after the attacks occurred?

RUSK: It was decided upon after the attacks occurred.

Q: Was that a meeting in which the President personally got involved?

RUSK: Oh, yes, he was very much involved in this one.

Q: What about the degree of advice at that time? Was it still pretty much unanimous that this was something we couldn't allow, or were there important objections?

RUSK: I don't recall any significant objections from any of the senior advisers. I think the advisers to the President were unanimous on this point.

Q: That we should retaliate?

RUSK: That's right. There was some discussion about how many points and what kind of targets and things of that sort, and it was decided to limit the retaliation to the bases from which these torpedo boats had come out and basically retaliate against the nature of the attack rather than to attack Hanoi and Haiphong and more general targets.

Q: What about the Resolution that grew out of it? Was that something that also arose at that time, or was that a matter that had been discussed previously and decided upon?

RUSK: Fairly early in his Administration, President Johnson came to the conclusion that at some stage he was going to ask Congress to associate themselves with the effort in Vietnam.

He had remembered very clearly that at the outbreak of the Korean War that Congressional leaders had advised President Truman not to ask for a Congressional resolution and suggested to President Truman that he use the powers of the President to conduct the Korean operation. Well, President Truman accepted that advice and did not ask for a resolution, and then some Senators, particularly Senator [Robert A.] Taft, later attacked the whole operation on the grounds that he should have asked for a resolution.

President Johnson, remembering that, felt that at some stage he wanted to associate the Congress with him in the effort in Vietnam. Since that was known, various efforts were made to see what a draft resolution would look like. I never participated in those directly

because I never thought the time was ripe to ask the Congress for a resolution, so that I am not familiar with the details of some of that preliminary staff work that had been done.

Then when the Gulf of Tonkin came along and the President consulted with the leadership of the Congress, he discussed with them whether this was not the time now to go for a resolution putting the Congress behind the United States policy on Vietnam and making it clear to North Vietnam that we were serious about it. The Congressional leadership encouraged him to do so. There was practical unanimity among Congressional leaders on the desirability of a Congressional resolution, and so we had our hearings, and promptly the Congress passed the so-called Gulf of Tonkin Resolution with only two dissenting votes in the Senate.

Paragraph II of that resolution, which the historian will be able to see, of course, was not about the Gulf of Tonkin, but was about Southeast Asia, and it simply affirmed that the United States is prepared as The President determines to use whatever means are necessary including the use of armed force to assist the states covered by the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization in the defense of their liberty. Now, there was no question at all at the time about the meaning of that resolution.

Q: The critics— Mr. [J. William] Fulbright particularly, has later said that he didn't understand it to mean what it was later said to mean. Were there questions at the time? Was he given some kind of assurance at the time that has led him wrong?

RUSK: I think the historian will want to look at the discussion on the floor of the Senate on that resolution in order to make a judgment on that kind of point, because as I recall one Senator asked Senator Fulbright whether this resolution would encompass the dispatch of large numbers of forces to South Vietnam. Senator Fulbright said, “Yes, the resolution would cover that.” He hoped that it would not be necessary to take such steps, but that the resolution would cover it. So that there was no question at all in my mind at the time that the Congress knew what kind of resolution they were passing. Some of them later

changed their minds, and when they changed their minds they tried to throw some cloud upon the resolution itself. But there was no doubt about it at the time the resolution was passed.

Q: And no one was fooled who didn't want to be fooled.

RUSK:No, it's very simple language. These Senators are all educated men. It's only two or three short sentences. They knew exactly what they were voting for, and the floor discussion in the Senate brought out all of these aspects. Senator Morse, for example, who opposed the resolution, told the Senate very frankly what this resolution meant, and because it meant that he himself opposed it. It was a very far-reaching resolution.

In the testimony, by the way, Senator Fulbright told me at the close of Secretary McNamara's and my testimony that this was the best resolution of this sort that he had ever seen presented to the Senate. I noticed that that particular sentence was deleted from the published text of the testimony.

Q: That takes on considerable irony in the light of later events.

RUSK: I will never forget Senator Fulbright's remark in that regard. He was all for it at the time. He urged the Senate to give it immediate and unanimous approval. Perhaps we made a mistake in not calling it the Fulbright Resolution.

Q: I keep asking you about whether or not anybody was opposed because I think it is important to get it into the record that there was, if it seems there was, unanimity through this period on these decisions that sometimes the critics later forget about. It's a little repetitious for me to keep asking you, but that's why I do it.

RUSK: President Johnson briefed the Congress on Vietnam more extensively than any President has briefed the Congress on anything. When he first became President he used to have briefing sessions at the White House for Senators and Congressmen. He

brought them down in groups and he'd have the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State give them a full discussion and gave them a chance to ask questions [and] make comments and I think he went through the entire Congress at least twice in this course. There was not evident at that time in those briefings and the reactions of the Senators and Congressmen to those briefings—there was not evident any I serious opposition to what we were trying to do in Vietnam.

It was not until the costs of the war increased, it was not until large numbers of Americans got out there and the casualties went up, that in 1966 and 1967 there began to be second thoughts in the Congress about our commitments in Vietnam.

Q: Some of them then forgot how they had reacted to your—

RUSK: That's right, and they forgot that they passed the Southeast Asia Treaty with only one dissenting vote back in 1955, with only Senator [William] Langer [R-ND] opposing it. Senator Morse voted for the Southeast Asia Treaty; Senator Mansfield signed the Southeast Asia Treaty along with Mr. Dulles and Senator [H.Alexander] Smith [R-NJ] in Manila when the Southeast Asia Treaty was first brought into being.

Q: At the same time all of this was going on, during the summer, there were some I suppose you could call them peace initiatives being made. Can you add anything on things such as the Seaborne mission as to what we were trying to do at that point, the sort of guarded approaches we were making?

RUSK: Let me make some general observations on so-called peace initiatives. On our side some of us had remembered that other crises had been resolved by preliminary secret contacts before any publicly known discussions got under way, The Berlin crisis of 1948 was resolved by private contacts between Ambassador [Philip C.] Jessup and Ambassador [Jacob A.] Malik in New York, and the matter was pretty well settled before the fact that talks were being held even became known.

The Korean War was put in the course of settlement by some very private contacts which have never been in the public record involving Ambassador [George] Kennan on the part of the United States, and that led to the negotiations which brought the Korean War to a conclusion.

So we were always ready to explore the possibility of private contacts which might give the clue to a solution of the problem. We were not interested in prolonging the war, we'd like to wind it up as soon as possible on a satisfactory basis, and we didn't want any possibility that the absence of machinery or the absence of contact would be an obstacle toward bringing the war to a conclusion. So we took a good many initiatives ourselves in stimulating such things as the [J. Blair] Seaborne mission. We were interested when third-party governments tried to get into it—the Canadians, the Soviets, the Poles, the Hungarians, the Romanians—or when individuals like U Thant or private citizens tried to play a role in one way or another. We were always ready to try out those various channels to see whether or not there was any indication on the part of Hanoi that they would be interested in talking about peace.

One thing that the historian will discover if he looks carefully through the record is that so long as I was Secretary of State there was never an initiative from Hanoi that could be described as a peace-feeler. The initiatives always came from somebody else, either ourselves or third parties. I cannot recall a single instance in which there was an initiative from Hanoi that could be described as a peace-feeler. Again the historian may want to make a judgment on whether we tried too hard in these peace-feelers and these various contacts—that by the frequency in which we probed for some possibility of peace and by the numbers of bombing halts and things of that sort that we might have mislead Hanoi into thinking that we were irresolute.

Q: The same criticism one might make about not starting the troops.

RUSK: That's right. So it may be that we have—by our concern to be sure that no obstacle stood in the way of making peace—that we confirmed in Hanoi's mind the idea that we were ready for peace at any price, and therefore caused them to be more obstinate and more stubborn than they might otherwise have been. That's a judgment that the historian will have to make.

Q: Did we have a well-conceived negotiating position at that time or were you just really trying to talk to them—to make contact with them as opposed to picking out what the negotiation would look like if indeed they got started?

RUSK: The basic negotiating position was really very simple. The problem of peace in Southeast Asia arises because there came to be more than fifty regiments of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam, because more than forty thousand North Vietnamese troops were in Laos contrary to the agreement of 1962, because North Vietnamese-trained guerrillas were operating in Thailand, because Prince [Norodom] Sihanouk had publicly charged that Hanoi and Peking were giving assistance to the guerrillas in Cambodia-the most neutral of all neutralist countries. We were aware of the fact that men and arms were being infiltrated across the northeastern frontier of Burma out of China, and the Governor of India has made public the Chinese involvement in the tribal areas of Eastern India.

The problem of peace in Southeast Asia arose because Hanoi and Peking were doing things outside of their own borders that they had no business doing, so our negotiating position was basically that they stop doing it and that they take their troops back home and that the South Vietnamese be allowed to work out their own future for themselves; that the Laos Agreement of 1962 be given full effect; and that things like that North Vietnamese infiltration of Thailand be stopped.

There are some people who would call that asking for unconditional surrender. We weren't asking Hanoi to surrender anything, not an acre of ground, not a man. We weren't trying

to destroy Hanoi. We weren't trying to seize them. We weren't trying to support the South Vietnamese in overrunning North Vietnam. All we were trying to do was to get the North Vietnamese to stop doing what they were doing outside of their frontiers against their neighbors in Southeast Asia, so our negotiating position was relatively simple on that point.

There were possibilities [that] if the North Vietnamese wanted elections, if they were ready for some political determination by the people of South Vietnam as to their own political future—there were things of that sort that could be agreed to. We never had any problem about devising a negotiating position, but the point is that we sent out signal after signal after signal and never got any return from Hanoi.

Q: None at all during this whole period.

RUSK: None at all. There were some people, particularly private citizens, some third parties, who did not understand the lingo of the discussions between ourselves and North Vietnam, and they would go to Hanoi, or they would meet some Hanoi representative at some third capital, and they would hear something that they felt made a significant difference. They'd come back seven months pregnant, thinking that peace was about to break out, and that they were going to be responsible and maybe get the Nobel Peace Prize for it. Well, when we would check these things out against what Hanoi had been saying and what they were saying privately and what they were saying to us, we found nothing in them. So we had a frustrating experience in so-called peace initiatives.

Q: Does this include such things as, say, the U Thant one?

RUSK: There were a great variety of initiatives that would have to be characterized as something less than constructive. The Poles, for example, had the idea that their job was to find some face-saving formula by which we could save our face and get out of Vietnam; whereas, we were not trying to save face—we were trying to save South Vietnam.

The Hungarian Foreign Minister [Janos] Peter and I engaged in some serious talks over a period of time about an initiative which Peter was supposed to be taking. That turned out to be a fraud.

Q: What was the defector's name—later-

RUSK: Radvanyi.

Q: He confirmed later that that one was a fraud?

RUSK: Yes. When Radvanyi defected he told me that there never had been anything in the Peter approach, that Peter was not in an effective contact with Hanoi, and that they had had no encouragement from Hanoi about the things that Peter was saying to me. Radvanyi told me that he tried to convey that to me by an expression on his face when he was coming in at the request of his government to report on one or another aspect of it, he was trying to give me a signal that what he was saying was not true. He was accompanied by a member of his Embassy who was a member of the Secret Policy so he couldn't tell me straightaway, but that was an instance that was just a plain fraud.

The Romanian initiative was a serious one.

Q: That was a very late one, wasn't it?

RUSK: That's right. That was at a later stage when [Gheorghe] Macuvescu, the Deputy Foreign Minister, went to Hanoi at least on two occasions; and they were serious and sober, and although nothing cane out of it, the Romanian part in it was a responsible and reasonable part that we appreciated.

As far as U Thant's alleged initiative was concerned, it's very unfortunate that the principal witness to that transaction, Adlai Stevenson, died before we could get the matter fully put down in the record, but a mistake we made was that we did not conduct that transaction

in writing at all times because we found U Thant to be an unreliable person in regard to it. We got the impression chat U Thant's channel, as the principal Soviet representative in the Secretariat of the United Nations. We thought we knew that this fellow was a KGB man, so we were immediately alerted to the fact that this KGB man might be representing his government—the Soviet government—in stating that Hanoi would be willing to meet in Rangoon if we were prepared to do so; or he may be conducting a black operation. He may be trying to deceive us in some way.

I had several talks with [Andrei A.] Gromyko immediately following that episode, and there was never any indication from Gromyko that he was aware that Hanoi wanted to meet with us in Rangoon. Had this been a Soviet government affair, there's no question that Gromyko would have said something to me about it because we had some very private talks on the whole subject of Vietnam.

To clinch the matter, I asked the Soviet Ambassador, Mr. [Anatoly F.] Dobrynin, about this transaction, because it had gotten to be public and gotten to be something of a little minor scandal. Dobrynin, on one of his trips to Moscow, searched the records in the foreign office and talked to his colleagues in the foreign office and came back and reported to me that there never had been a message from Hanoi, and that their man in the Secretariat had never been given any instructions to say to U Thant anything whatever on the subject. Dobrynin's speculation was that maybe their man in the Secretariat had made some casual remark at a cocktail party or in some other way, and that U Thant had seized upon this and run with the ball without having anything in mind.

Q: This was all after the event?

RUSK: This was all after the event. Now U Thant never gave us any message which he had sent to Hanoi, or which Hanoi had sent to him, about the possibility of a meeting in Rangoon. We never had any messages in front of us on which we could make a judgment. We simply had a very closely guarded hint from U Thant that if we were prepared to meet

in Rangoon that Hanoi was willing to do so. We could never confirm that. My own present judgment is that this was something that U Thant had done, hut that there was nothing from Hanoi on which he could base it.

Q: What about the charges made by the publicists, like [Eric] Sevareid [Look, Nov. 31, 1965] and Norman Cousins, that somehow this got stopped purposefully before it got to the White House, or that it was not fully considered or fully checked into at the time of the event itself?

RUSK: Again, let me point out that nothing of this sort developed in my talks with Gromyko.

Q: And they were at the time—?

RUSK: And they were at the time. They were at the United Nations and in Washington at the time. Had there been any Soviet knowledge of Hanoi's willingness to talk in Rangoon, it certainly would have come out in these talks with Gromyko. So we were skeptical about the authenticity of this all along. I personally suggested to U Thant that he use whatever channel he had to follow up on it and develop the matter further before we made a final judgment on it, but he never did that, never reported back to us on it. Just before his death —the very week of his death—Adlai Stevenson was in London and was on BBC, and he was asked about this. He said, 'Well, I was never very clear about with whom the talks were supposed to be held and what about," so that on the public record Adlai Stevenson's own skepticism on the matter was registered.

I have no way of judging the Eric Sevareid story because that was a third-hand account. Sevareid himself says that his conversation with Adlai Stevenson was supposed to be off-the-record, but how much of that was Eric Sevareid and how much was Adlai Stevenson, I don't know. Again, it's a pity that we never got this point really straightened out while Adlai Stevenson was alive.

We did not reduce this transaction to writing because U Thant was so insistent upon the utter secrecy of the matter that we respected his request to handle it simply on a word of mouth basis, and it was a little unsatisfactory because the communication was from U Thant to Adlai Stevenson to me. Whatever I knew about it, the President knew; and there was never any concealment of anything that was going on. But we had a deep skepticism about the authenticity of any such idea, and it later worked out that our skepticism was well-founded.

Q: That pretty well ended the events of '64, with our election and, as you've indicated, the increased infiltration. Did the military situation change sharply at that general time period—late '64 and the beginning of '65? Did it deteriorate markedly?

RUSK: In the spring of '65 it was apparent that unless we made some significant reinforcements of our own forces that the increased manpower of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong would likely cut the country in two and could cause very serious problems. We were faced with a serious step-up in infiltration, including North Vietnamese regular units, and I have no doubt that had President Johnson not increased our forces in the spring and summer of 1965 that the situation could have collapsed from a military point of view.

Q: That is in spite of the opening of bombing which came in February.

RUSK: That's right.

Q: Can you lead up to that and the circumstances which led to taking that action? That becomes one of the main points of attack by critics in later times.

RUSK: I'm not a very good witness on the actual beginning of the bombing of North Vietnam in February of 1965, because I had gone to the Churchill funeral and had come down with the flu. [I] came back and spent some time in the hospital and then went to

Florida for a period of ten days or so. I was not present for the discussions which led to the beginning of the bombing of the North.

I was not opposed to it. I felt that we should do whatever was necessary to affect the battlefield in the South, and the bombing of the infiltration routes in Laos and the bombing of the supply routes coming down from the North were entirely in accord with my judgment as to what the situation permitted or required.

My general attitude toward bombing the North reflected somewhat my impressions from the Korean experience. We bombed everything in North Korea from the 38th Parallel right to the Yalu River and had complete air superiority, and yet with full bombing we were not able to prevent the North Koreans and the Chinese from maintaining an army of five hundred thousand men at the front. They would bring in their supplies piggy-back, and at night, and in bad weather, and build up their supplies and then lunge forward for ten days or so, and then wait and build up their supplies again and lunge again.

So I was skeptical about the direct effect of bombing on the battlefield itself. I had no doubt that the attrition of forces in the infiltration routes made that bombing valuable, and I had no doubt that the limitations on supply routes was valuable. I was always skeptical about bombing up in the far North, in the Hanoi-Haiphong area, because I did not believe that that bombing had much effect on the battlefield in the South—and it was bombing that was very expensive in terms of planes and men lost. Hanoi and Haiphong were two of the most heavily defended areas that you've ever seen in warfare. So I was always in a mood to suspend that kind of bombing if there was any possibility of converting it into a serious peace move.

There were times when we would stop the bombing around Hanoi and Haiphong for periods of several days in a radius of five or ten miles of the two cities in conjunction with some peace move that we or somebody else was making. Now, anyone who ever expected the bombing to end the war ought to have his head examined, because bombing

just doesn't do that. It makes it more difficult, but it doesn't prove to be a decisive military factor.

Q: Was there a disagreement, or a misunderstanding, about what we hoped to accomplish by the bombing in that first few months in the spring of 1965? Did some people have one idea that it would lead to the negotiating table, other people think that it would end the war on a military basis, and other people think that it might just punish them? That became an item that the critics fastened on at a later point, too.

RUSK: Well, in retrospect, I think that it was a mistake to have the bombing of the North run by Commander-in-Chief Pacific from Hawaii rather than by the commander in South Vietnam, because that tended to mean that there were two wars. There was [Gen. William] Westmoreland's war in the South and there was Admiral [U.S. Grant] Sharp's war in the North. CINCPAC in Hawaii was of the view that if they just continued to escalate their bombing that that alone would bring the war to a conclusion, whereas the effect on the war in the South was minimal.

The bombing was also related to the question as to whether the war would expand and whether Red China would come in. If anyone had asked me in 1963 whether we could have a half a million men in South Vietnam and bomb everything in the North right up to the Chinese border without bringing in Red China, I would have been hard put to it to say that you could. One of the effects of a policy of gradual response was that at no given moment did we ever present Peking or Moscow with enough of a change in the situation to require them to make a major decision based on overall world-wide considerations, in terms of intervening in that war. So just as the North Vietnamese infiltrated, so did we and helped thereby, I think, to limit the war to Vietnam.

Q: Is that why publicly the President frequently referred to the policy even after the bombing began as really being no change or not inconsistent with what we'd been doing anyway? Was that pretty well for Hanoi's consumption?

RUSK: That was partly for that, yes. You see, we were trying to limit the expansion of this war. We didn't want to see it develop into a bigger war, and we didn't want the Red Chinese to come in. We didn't want Moscow to come in with any of their own forces. One of the reasons, therefore, that we played down the importance of any particular steps that we took was to play it down from the point of view of the enemy as well.

Q: What about the timing of the bombing? Isn't it Charles Roberts of Newsweek, or somebody, who is quoted as saying that Mr. Johnson once told him that the bombing had been decided on back in 1964 and had been waiting for a time—or that's the implication anyway. Was it a matter that was decided upon during that period when you indicate you were—

RUSK: No, the bombing of the North was always, from 1961 onwards, one of the possibilities. It was one of the alternatives that was considered, but no decision was made until February of 1965.

Q: It was retaliatory—

RUSK: Yes, but all alternatives were constantly being looked at right across the entire spectrum. Some alternatives were dismissed rather quickly. For example, the alternative of just getting out—withdrawal. The alternative of using nuclear weapons was just brushed aside and put on the shelf because there was no basis on which anyone would reasonably want to use nuclear weapons in that situation. But all of these alternatives were constantly being looked at when any important decisions came up for review, and we established review groups from time to time without having in mind that there would be new decisions, but just to review the bidding—to see where we were, to see whether we could do things differently, and to see whether there were opportunities that we had overlooked either in the peace direction or on the military side. I would be surprised if the record would show that any decision were made to start the bombing before February 1965, although there was discussion of it.

Q: There was the consideration, I'm sure, by everybody that bombing might also mean the necessity for added troop deployment as supports units, if nothing else. Was the connection between bombing and troop increase recognized and fully considered?

RUSK: Yes. You see, the armed forces of South Vietnam were somewhat fragile during this period. And the political situation in South Vietnam was somewhat fragile. There had been the overthrow of Diem; there had been a succession of coups—

Q: Somewhat of an understatement right at that particular period.

RUSK: That's correct. So if bombing would lead to a larger war, that is if the North Vietnamese were to shoot the works and put all of their regular forces against the South, then the question is whether the South Vietnamese and the forces that we had there were capable of standing up to it, you see. Some of us wanted to be careful about what we did militarily until there had gotten to be a stronger situation in the South, both politically and militarily. Otherwise you might start something you couldn't see through. So bombing the North itself required that the situation in the South be strengthened because it could be anticipated that the North would make a larger effort in response to the bombing of the North.

Q: So really the beginning the bombing and the troop decision are part of the same thing?

RUSK: Yes.

Q: In this sense when you decide on one you know you're deciding on the other at the same time.

RUSK: The bombing undoubtedly greatly increased the length of time it took to infiltrate men and material into the South. We picked up a lot of prisoners who reported on their experiences on the route south, and it's quite clear that the bombing was a harassment

that they didn't like at all, and that the attrition, morale and otherwise, on the infiltrators from air-bombing was very considerable.

Q: Was there important opposition within the government at high level to the bombing at the time it was undertaken?

RUSK: No. As a matter of fact, George Ball recommended it as Acting Secretary. You see, I was away at the time, and he would have been one who later might have been expected to oppose it, but he made the recommendation.

Q: And the fact that Mr. Kosygin was in Hanoi and not considered important enough to delay it when the Pleiku attack occurred?

RUSK: At that time the bombing had nothing to do with Hanoi. It was on the southern part of North Vietnam. It was on the infiltration routes and just across the DMZ. Initially it started out as simply pinpoint attacks on a limited number of targets and did not start out as a systematic bombing of North Vietnam.

I think there were those who—there were some—who felt that it might be better to wait until Mr. Kosygin got out of town, but the Pleiku attack was delivered while Kosygin was in town. So you've got to have some sort of sense of balance and reciprocity on these things. If the North Vietnamese laid on a particular attack in Mr. Kosygin's presence, we didn't see any reason why we couldn't lay on a responsive attack while he was still there. But there was never any question about his personal safety because the bombing didn't go up there at all.

Q: The responsive nature of it was incidental? It was understood by everybody that this was the beginning of what would be a continuing policy, not a one-shot response.

RUSK: That is correct.

Q: Let's begin by talking about the pauses. There were two publicized ones at least in 1965, the one in May for six days, I guess, and the more prominently displayed one at Christmas-time. What was the purpose and the results of those actions?

RUSK: The point had been made that North Vietnam would never talk so long as bombing was going on in the North, and so on several occasions we stopped the bombing either partially or entirely in order to find out whether contact would indicate any readiness to talk on the part of Hanoi about serious matters.

In may of 1965 we stopped for six days but saw no indication of any desire to talk or any change in their situation on the ground, and so we resumed that bombing. Then later on that year it was hinted to us that that bombing pause had been too short; and that there had not been time for other governments to turn around with Hanoi and explore the situation—develop what might be done.

Ambassador Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, told McGeorge Bundy—whether on instructions or not I don't know—but told McGeorge Bundy that if we could stop for a longer period, say two to three weeks, that that would give the Soviet government a chance to make contact with Hanoi and see if something could be done. The President was skeptical of this and was skeptical of the idea of bombing [pauses] because he had seen no indication from Hanoi that they were interested in peace. We came up to the Christmas bombing pause which was traditional—to stop a few days at Christmas—and the President decided, on my recommendation and others, to extend that bombing pause for a further period in order to see whether or not Dobrynin's remark to McGeorge Bundy had any substance in it, and to give other people a chance to make contact with Hanoi if they wished to do so. So we stopped for thirty-seven days, but on about the thirty-fifth day Ho Chi Minh made a statement which was very negative indeed and made it clear that a longer bombing pause would not do the trick. So the bombing was resumed.

I think what we have been up against here, and I'm now speaking in September of 1969, is the fact that North Vietnam has not yet made a decision to give up its desire to seize South Vietnam by force and incorporate it into North Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh's will, which was published at the time of his death, makes that very clear. The reunification of Vietnam under Hanoi was always a consistent and permanent objective of Ho Chi Minh.

The North Vietnamese might have cooperated with any face-saving device by which we would simply abandon South Vietnam, but bombing pauses, and intermediaries, and peace initiatives, and all the proposals that were made over the years ran up against that hard fact that Hanoi had not abandoned the decision that it had made back in 1959-1960 to go after South Vietnam and unify it by force if necessary.

When you have a bombing halt there are always those who say, 'Well, if you will just stop the bombing a little longer, something good might happen." So whether it was six days or whether it was thirty-seven days, or whatever it was , you see, there would always be critics who would like to make it permanent. We did make it permanent in 1968, and even then the attitude of the North Vietnamese negotiators in Paris showed that they were just as hard and implacable as ever, and that a full stop of the bombing on a permanent basis did not produce the desired result.

Q: So really we were making tactical changes when actually they would have to make a strategic change of giving up a major objective before there was any hope.

RUSK: That's right.

Q: Was there a major debate in our government about that bombing pause of Christmas of '65, or was that something that was decided on fairly narrowly by just the very top advisers, with the President playing a personal role?

RUSK: There was no great debate about it. There was a recommendation from me and others that we extend the Christmas bombing pause for another period, chiefly to find out

whether the Soviets would be able to do anything in Hanoi that would be constructive. There was no great fight about it, so I would think that it was dealt with in a fairly relaxed manner.

I must confess that President Johnson's disappointment in that thirty-seven day bombing pause made a lasting imprint on him, because he was very skeptical from that time onward that anything could be done by way of peace initiatives, and probings, and bombing halts, and things of that sort. I think that he might feel that he was badly advised to go through that thirty-seven day bombing halt, because nothing came out of it, you see. But it was a calculated risk and a calculated possibility, and those of us who recommended it felt that it was worth the try since no great damage was done on the military side by a thirty-seven day pause.

Q: What about the Russians? Did you, in your mind, at that time operate on the general assumption that they were really trying to be helpful?

RUSK: I don't agree with those who think the Soviets want us to be engaged in a war in Vietnam. I think they would be glad to see this war brought to a conclusion, but on the other hand they have reasons of their own for not wanting Hanoi to be driven into the arms of Peking. This would be something of interest to them in their problems inside the Communist world.

We never found that the Russians were prepared to step out in advance of Hanoi and take positions that were not already agreed to by Hanoi. They would refer points to Hanoi simply as messages from the United States, and they would make general statements that if the bombing stopped something good would happen—something of that sort. But we never got Moscow to step out in advance of Hanoi on any significant point. I think this was because Moscow had become something of a satellite of Hanoi—because of Moscow's fear that if they weren't careful Hanoi might just align itself fully with Peking with all that would mean for the Soviets in the Communist world.

Q: What about the display of public diplomacy? That doesn't sound like something that the professional diplomats would conceive. Did Mr. Johnson conceive that idea himself, sending Harriman and Bundy and—

RUSK: Arthur Goldberg.

Q: —Arthur Goldberg around the world on that tour?

RUSK: That was basically President Johnson's own idea. He wanted to get maximum public opinion effect from the bombing pause, and also to increase the possibilities that there might be some response from Hanoi in some fashion. If Hanoi felt the pressure of world public opinion effect from the bombing pause, and also to increase the possibilities that there might be some response from Hanoi in some fashion. If Hanoi felt the pressure of world public opinion, they might be more responsive than if they did not feel that pressure.

My own view was that Hanoi is fairly well insulated from world public opinion. They pay it very little attention. They don't really care about it and therefore, generalized world public opinion doesn't mean very much to them. I doubt very much that Hanoi pays much attention to advice from Moscow. I think Hanoi has been very stubborn about its own private attitude towards these matters.

Q: Did that really accomplish very little, in the way of meaningful—?

RUSK: No, I think the visits that you refer to did do something to help in the attitudes of other governments and world public opinion generally, but it didn't have any impact on the actual war itself.

Q: One thing I noticed that struck me about the Norman Cousins' story, and of course he is one of those whom you indicated as an example—one of the people who thought in a pause—if you just let it go two or three days longer something would happen. His contacts

that he mentions on this were White House staff people who were not really concerned primarily with National Security affairs. They were Moyers and Valenti, as I recall.

Had this become a problem—people outside of the normal areas such as State and Bundy involving themselves in Vietnam affairs and trying to play a role perhaps they weren't qualified to play?

RUSK: Vietnam is a subject in which everybody gets involved in one way or another. If they're not called in to be involved, they tend to involve themselves in it. Valenti and Moyers were both very close to the President, but they did not have any direct responsibility for Vietnam.

During that period I don't myself recall any of those private contacts that reflected any real movement by Hanoi—that is, during that thirty-seven days pause. Had there been any such movement we would have known about it, and we would have been very alert to it because we were looking for it. But wishful thinking plays a big role in these matters, and a lot of times people just rely upon their hopes rather than upon evidence as to whether any movement had occurred.

Q: What about the resumption of it—the physical decision to resume bombing. Did a debate of some substance occur at that time, as to whether or not to continue it?

RUSK: Not very much, because Ho Chi Minh had made his attitude very clear on about the thirty-fifth day of the bombing pause, and we waited another two or three days before we started the bombing, but there was no indication that the thirty-seven day pause had made the slightest imprint on Hanoi.

Q: Going back to my old standard question here, had dissent against what we were doing in Vietnam become widespread at all in the executive branch by, say, early 1966?Were there beginning to be opponents in high places by that early?

RUSK: The historian will want to look at some of the oral histories done by some of those who were supposed to be dissenters to check on this, but it was my impression that there was much less dissent than the newspapers were reflecting.

In the case of George Ball, for example, he did not argue vigorously inside the government for a substantially different point of view. He was named by the President as the Devil's Advocate to take an opposing point of view, in order that the President would have in front of him different considerations so that the President would be sure that all aspects of the matter were in front of him when he made his decisions.

Q: Named by the President?

RUSK: Named by the President. He was asked by the President to be a Devil's Advocate, and it may be that George Ball convinced himself in the process. But George Ball didn't come into my office every other day saying, “Look, we've got to do something radically different in Vietnam.” He was extraordinarily helpful in working out the details of these various peace maneuvers and contacts and procedures and things of that sort. He managed those very well.

Q: I guess things like the [Edmund A.] Gullion mission were pretty much his operation, weren't they? He was the—

RUSK: Yes, in general the senior advisers to the President were generally unanimous in their recommendations to the President on matters involving Vietnam.

Q: And that still was true—

RUSK: Once in awhile the President would have to make a decision. For example, there might be differences of view about whether a particular target should be taken under bombing.

Q: A tactical matter.

RUSK: That sort of thing, and whether a particular factory or particular bridge near a populated area, or something of that sort should be hit. But on the larger questions, the President's advisers were generally unanimous.

On that point, the historian will want to 'look carefully through the notes of the Tuesday Luncheon meetings because those meetings were crucial in terms of the decisions that were made about Vietnam.

Long before historians get to this particular record, they will know all about those Tuesday Luncheon meetings because they undoubtedly will appear in books and things of that sort. There the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the [Joint] Chiefs of Staff, and the Director of Central Intelligence Agency, and the President's Special Assistant on National Security matters—Walt Rostow and before that McGeorge Bundy—would sit down at the table and talk in complete confidence and candor about the matters that were up for decision.

They were invaluable occasions because we all could be confident that everyone around the table would keep his mouth shut and wouldn't be running off to Georgetown cocktail parties and talking about it, and so great candor was possible. We had a good deal of very lively discussion and the notes on those discussions will be extremely helpful to the historian in making judgments about who advised what and what the issues were.

Q: About that same time period, say early 1966, at least in your own mind what were the prospects? How did things look at that point? Did it look like we were going to be able to accomplish still with a reasonable investment of resources the goals that you'd set out to accomplish five years earlier?

RUSK: I never had any doubt about our ability to deny Hanoi a forcible seizure of Vietnam. I never had any fear about the possibility that the North Vietnamese armed forces could

achieve a military victory in the South, nor did I believe that the North Vietnamese would be able to generate real support among the South Vietnamese people.

There were many reasons for that view. One was simply a military judgment about who had the muscle to accomplish what they were trying to do, but I was impressed with the fact that we had thousands of Americans in South Vietnam out in the countryside in groups of ones and two and threes and fours living among the South Vietnamese people and completely at their mercy. While I was Secretary of State I don't think I can recall a single incident of treachery on the part of the South Vietnamese people with respect to those Americans. I don't recall that any of them were turned over to the Viet Cong by their South Vietnamese colleagues. If the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese were making any headway among the people of South Vietnam, or if the South Vietnamese people really wanted what Hanoi was trying to do to them, you were bound to get a lot of incidents of treachery with respect to these Americans that were living out in the countryside completely at their mercy, and this just didn't happen.

Q: These were civilian Americans too—not armed—

RUSK: Civilian Americans, not armed, and just wholly dependent upon the South Vietnamese people in the countryside for their own personal security.

We did find it necessary to build up our forces out there as the North Vietnamese built up theirs. And there could have come a time in 1965 and '66 when the North Vietnamese might have had enough force in the country to achieve their purposes had we not built up our own forces, and had not the South Vietnamese not built up their forces as well.

Q: I think one of the things that has bothered some of the critics maybe had been the fact that the government always seemed to see the situation in terms as you've described, and the non-official reports from South Vietnam always were so much more pessimistic. Did you ever try to find out why your information and the information that the press got didn't

seem to be the same, or why they interpreted it differently? Did the government take into consideration this other kind of intelligence that was coming back from nonofficial sources?

RUSK: One of our leading publishers, a man of great reputation, visited South Vietnam and came back shaking his head about the reporters out there. He said that there were too many reporters out there playing the role of Secretary of State.

Q: We had lots of Secretaries of State during your years.

RUSK: There were too many reporters who had their own view as to Vietnam and the outcome and who did not accept the basic commitment of the United States and the basic interest of the United States in an independent Southeast Asia.

Also, bad news makes more news than good news. If you had two thousand acts of kindness on the parts of South Vietnamese to American soldiers in the course of a day, and you had one instance where an American sergeant in a bar would get into a scuffle with somebody, it would be the American sergeant's scuffle that would be reported rather than any one of these two thousand acts of kindness. It's in the nature of news that the negative is more news than the positive, and so we did have some problems about the nature of the reporting out there from time to time.

Q: But you were confident enough in your own sources that you were pretty sure that what you were getting was accurate in contrast to what the public was being sometimes told?

RUSK: Well, in the middle of a war there are always problems of marginal inaccuracies in terms of casualties, in terms of the extent of pacification, and things of that sort. You always were in the position of leaving a margin for error of five or ten percent, or whatever it might be. But the general accuracy of our official reporting, I think, is well-founded, and the historian will find that it was in good shape.

Q: The first major event of that year, I guess, was the Honolulu conference. Was there anything about the background of that, or the accomplishments there, that you can add perhaps to the documentation?

RUSK: I don't think that there's anything that I can add to that that is not fully in the record, and the historian can get that out of the record.

Q: The timing of that during the first of the televised Foreign Relations Committee Hearings— was this a decisive element in deciding to have it right then rather than at some perhaps other time?

RUSK: I don't think so. I think that was a matter of mutual convenience to have it at that time.

Q: Shortly after that, you've indicated earlier you might just mention something specific about the [Chester] Ronning initiative, which comes in the spring of 1966, I think, the Canadians—

RUSK: Well, that was again one of those efforts that we made to establish contact to find out whether there was any possibility for a peaceful settlement. Ronning was a very competent diplomat and had access to people in Hanoi. At least we thought he would have access to them, and we simply briefed him so that he could pursue the matter a bit and explore the possibilities, but he produced nothing.

Q: Just a blank still, pretty much similar to the '64-'65 times.

RUSK: That's right. We drew many blanks. That was one; the Gullion mission was one. There were many efforts that were made that simply showed no response at all from Hanoi.

Q: Did the Canadians agree with that? Were the Canadians not unhappy that we had slighted them in some way?

RUSK: No, I think that they realized that this was a vaccination that didn't take.

Q: What about then from that time on into the balance of '66? Are there any unpublicized efforts that were of consequence during that period that we put some faith in at the time?

RUSK: I don't think so. I think, and when you talk about putting faith in them, we made the effort even though we did not expect that any miracles would occur, but we made the effort so that there would never be any possibility that the problem was lack of communication or lack of a channel. We thought it was important always to maintain a channel between Washington and Hanoi of some sort, somewhere, through some means, so that if Hanoi ever came around to a change of mind it would be possible to register that fairly quickly and easily and in confidence.

Q: What about the initiative that they call in print now, 'Marigold." Was that of a different order at the end of 1966, one that had more substance to it than just a contact-type thing?

RUSK: This was a rather strange exercise because the Polish member of the ICC in Saigon had some talks with [Henry] Cabot Lodge and then went up to Hanoi on a visit. After spending some time there [he] came back with a formulation of the U.S. position. He didn't come back with a formulation of Hanoi's position, but he came back and presented to Cabot Lodge a series of points which he considered to be his interpretation of the U.S. position. Well, now, this was a rather strange procedure because we would have expected he would have brought back something that reflected Hanoi's position, but he indicated that he thought Hanoi would talk on the basis of that stated position.

Q: How different was that from anything that Lodge would have given him?

RUSK: We would not have formulated our position that way; it had some similarities, but it also had some points needing clarification. Despite the fact that this was all very strange, we told the Poles to say to Hanoi that we would talk on the basis of these points although some clarification would be needed. The Poles objected very much to the phrase “some clarification would be needed,” because they wanted us simply to buy those categorically without any opportunity for really discussing them and we had to make it clear that we would have to discuss points of detail with Hanoi if we got into conversations with them. What message the Poles sent to Hanoi I don't know, but Hanoi refused to talk on that basis.

Q: The Poles couldn't produce the North Vietnamese at the—?

RUSK: That's right. The Poles simply were unable to produce the North Vietnamese. We were ready to—. We had men all set to be in Warsaw, ready for the talks, but the Poles were unable to produce North Vietnamese warm bodies.

Q: Do you think the bombings of Hanoi that the critics have made so much of played any part in this inability of the Poles?

RUSK: I think that was more of a pretext than a real reason. Among other things, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were bombing Saigon at that time, in terms of reciprocal —. I was in Saigon at about that time and they bombed the airfield at which I landed the day before I arrived, and while I was in town they tried to bomb the big bridge that leads northwest out of Saigon. But even then when the Poles said to us, “Oh, your bombing is terrible and gets in the way of these talks,” we stopped the bombing around Hanoi and Haiphong and told the Poles we were stopping the bombing around Hanoi and Haiphong for a radius of ten nautical miles—and that's three hundred and something square miles —and told them that if that was the problem then we would cure that particular part of it. That made no difference. My guess is this was all a pretext on the part of Hanoi, who did not want to talk.

Q: One of the accounts of that makes a lot of the fact that the bombing was coincidental and accidental, and maybe we wouldn't have done it had the coordination been better. Is it possible that that lack of coordination did exist?

RUSK: I suppose one could make that point, but the bombing that was involved was several miles from the center of Hanoi, and it was no more serious than the bombing which they were doing in Saigon. I mean if there was any real interest on the part of Hanoi in peace and in these proposals, they would not have let these bombing incidents get in the way. This was simply a reflection of the lack of seriousness of interest on their part.

Q: What about the Manila conference which was the next major gathering of the chiefs of state and all the people of consequence? Does it have some significant accomplishment or some details that you can add that are important?

RUSK: You're referring now to the summit conference?

Q: Yes.

RUSK: I think the Manila Conference was a very useful meeting of the chiefs of government of the countries with troops in Vietnam, and it made it possible for us to get pretty definite agreement, not only on the military measures which were required but also on the approach toward a peaceful settlement. It was there, you recall, that a formula was worked out for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Vietnam if North Vietnamese Forces were to be withdrawn and the level of violence subsided. No, I think it brought about a pretty good meeting of the minds with the chiefs of government with troops in Vietnam, and I think it was a very useful exercise.

Q: The reason I ask is that Secretary [Clark] Clifford later on will make quite a lot of the lack of enthusiasm that our allied governments expressed to him in the summer of 1967

when he toured around, but there wasn't that lack of enthusiasm—the six or nine months later?

RUSK: I must say that at Manila the other allies did not come rushing in with offers of substantially more troops. One of the burdens we've carried in Vietnam is that more countries have not participated with more muscle. Korea has done a valiant job with the large number of troops they have down there. Thailand has done a respectable job taking into account the jobs that exist in Thailand in the northeast there where the Thai armed forces are engaged against guerrillas in their own country, but Australia and New Zealand could have done more. The Philippines could have done more. Britain could have done more—Britain did nothing in the military side.

We needed more international effort here in a matter in which many countries have a stake, and this has been one of the burdens that we've had to carry. We have not found it possible to let the attitude of other countries determine what the United States does because we've got our own vital interests at stake here and we can't subject those to the unwillingness of other countries to pull their share of the load. So we've carried a heavier part in Vietnam than we ought to have carried if others had done their fair share of the job.

Q: But you weren't reading that, at the time of the Manila Conference, as being a question by them of the necessity of our action?

RUSK: No, there was none at all on that, and of course the Manila conference did help in increasing the number of troops somewhat put in by others.

Q: By that time, had the matter of peace initiatives been organized in your department in such a way that it's accurate to isolate something like the Harriman group, as I notice some accounts are now doing. Was there a specific task force sort of thing organized under Mr. Harriman to follow up all the peace initiatives?

RUSK: Yes. He was, I think, Ambassador-at-Large, and was given the responsibility of probing for any kind of possibilities of peace, and that was his full-time job. We tried our best to find ways and means to establish contact in a way that might lead to peaceful settlement, but again we ran across the adamant attitude of Hanoi at every stage.

Q: And people like the famous Harry Ashmore and William Baggs trip which comes early in 1967—they were just wishful thinking that there was some kind of movement on the part of Hanoi?

RUSK: Yes, they didn't bring back anything that changed the situation at all.

Q: Did missions like that contribute anything positive, or were they negative forces insofar as you were concerned?

RUSK: I think that they sometimes confused public opinion because they'd come back and pretend that there was some sort of a peace initiative which was not there. This was some of the same sort of confusion that attended Bob Kennedy's visit to Paris. It also may have helped convince Hanoi that we were interested in peace at any price because there were so many of these various efforts by intermediaries—or self-styled intermediaries—trying to probe for the possibilities of a peaceful settlement. My own guess is that if Hanoi realized without any doubt at all that we were committed and we were going to stay there, we were going to see it through, that they would bring themselves to a decision to make peace sooner rather than later.

But as of September 1969, I think that it would be fair to say that Hanoi now realizes that they cannot win what they want by military means. That it's beyond their capabilities. But they may also judge that if they just stay with it that American public opinion will collapse and that they will win on the home front in the United States rather than on the ground in Vietnam.

Q: By early in 1967 we were talking to the North Vietnamese for the first time, I assume in Moscow—the Trang and John Guthrie channel.

RUSK: Yes.

Q: What led up to that, and what were its consequences, if any?

RUSK: I think this was another attempt to establish a channel of communication that was discreet, that would not become public, so that if there was any message that the North Vietnamese were willing to give, that there would be a channel through which it could be given.

We did a number of these. There was the Ed Gullion attempt and there have been others, some of which have never been in the record; but I would suppose that there were literally dozens of efforts to establish a channel somewhere so that we could be in direct contact with the North Vietnamese. Again, the North Vietnamese weren't interested in talking seriously about peace.

Q: They didn't talk back at all in that channel?

RUSK: No. In general I would say that the North Vietnamese proved themselves on various occasions to be willing to listen. They would be willing to hear what we had to say, but they wouldn't send anything back on the return channel.

Q: We could talk, but that was a one-way—

RUSK: That's right, and so they would just probably analyze under a microscope what we were saying to see if there was any change in our point of view, but we never got anything back except a harsh reiteration of their public positions, their four points, or the Viet Congas ten points, or whatever it might be, as a basis for settlement in Vietnam.

Q: This is the time that we were proposing, as I understand it, what's called the Phase A-Phase B formula.

RUSK: Right.

Q: Proposing it, at least on one occasion, through Harold Wilson to Mr. Kosygin. That's a very confusing episode—the whole Chester Cooper mission to London and so on. Can you straighten that out, particularly in reference to its relation to Mr. Johnson's letter to Ho Chi Minh which coincides in time?

RUSK: Well, the Phase A-Phase B concept was that we could stop the bombing in Phase A if there was a Phase B in which other things would begin to happen on both sides. This was simply a small device to get around the North Vietnamese contention that nothing could happen until we stopped the bombing. So we thought we might be able to put together a package in which stopping the bombing would be the first step, but then there would be some previously agreed second and third steps which would move the situation toward peace in Vietnam. What we were interested in was knowing what would happen if we stopped the bombing and no one was able to tell us. The Phase A-Phase B was an attempt to negotiate on that particular basis.

I think in the Wilson-Kosygin exchanges—they worked out on the spot some actual language which was not precise enough for President Johnson, and which was generally in line with the kind of briefing that Chet Cooper had given to Prime Minister Wilson. But since in these matters every syllable, every comma, is important, Wilson concocted some language and gave it to Kosygin without clearing it with us first—that is, not clearing it with the President first. When the President got this proposal—the message—in front of him, he realized that he ought to give something to Kosygin which was consistent with what he, the President, had just gotten through giving to Ho Chi Minh. So Johnson insisted that Kosygin be given a type of message which was consistent with the message which the President had just sent to Ho Chi Minh in a letter.

Q: Well, did that reverse the Phase A-Phase B offer?

RUSK: No, it didn't, but it made it clear that we expected to have something in return for stopping the bombing. I think the record will show that and show how the various drafts came out and what the President's final draft was. It was unfortunate that Harold Wilson gave Mr. Kosygin some language which had not been cleared in advance with President Johnson. That was the basic cause of the misunderstanding.

Q: I want to ask you a couple of more questions about Mr. Johnson's letter. Let's let this tape run off.

In regard to the letter to Ho Chi Minh, I've been told on several occasions that that was a fairly personal matter with Mr. Johnson and yourself. What were the circumstances of that?

RUSK: President Johnson was a man who instinctively tried to put himself in the shoes of the other fellow and tried to figure out what was on his mind, and he wanted to be sure that the other fellow also know what was on the President's mind. So President Johnson felt that it would be desirable to have a direct communication with Ho Chi Minh so there would be no misunderstanding through intermediaries or anything else. He just put to him the proposition that we would stop the bombing in exchange for some reduction of the war and as a step toward peace. I think it was President Johnson's idea that he send the letter directly to Ho Chi Mirth.

Q: That's something he wanted to do?

RUSK: That's right. [It was] something he wanted to do, because he wanted to be sure that the top man on the other side knew what was in his own mind. So we drafted that letter, and he made some changes in it and then sent it on.

Q: You say 'be"—the Department drafted it, and Mr. Johnson edited it?

RUSK: I think it was done with the Special Assistant for Security Affairs, Walt Rostow, and myself doing the principal drafting on it.

Q: Did it go through several drafts over a considerable period of time, or was it a fairly?

RUSK: No, it was done fairly quickly and fairly simply. It was not a long letter.

Q: No, as I recall the published version—

RUSK: It was a fairly short letter.

Q: I was really thinking in terms of whether or not the letter had been drafted before Cooper's instructions had been made to send him to London—so that he would have had an opportunity to know—

RUSK: He didn't know anything about the draft of that letter.

Q: He wouldn't have known about that—?

RUSK: No, he didn't know about that letter.

Q: Is that the normal course of affairs that he wouldn't have known that?

RUSK: As a matter of fact, I think he went to London before the letter was finally drafted. I'm not sure, but I think the letter was sent while he was in London.

Q: So he wouldn't have had an opportunity to see the draft of it.

RUSK: That's right, but he would not have been in on that letter anyhow had he been in Washington. This was handled by a very small group.

Q: Did it represent any kind of change as far as the President's position was concerned?

RUSK: No, none at all.

Q: No hardening, or something of that nature, as some have maintained?

RUSK: That's right.

[interruption]

Q: We were in the middle of 1967 and you had, I assume, talked about the whole letter. Is there anything you think of to add?

RUSK: I think I have nothing more to add on that.

Q: In the summer of that year, or right at the beginning of fall, the major event is the San Antonio Formula. Did this represent something different on our part?

RUSK: The San Antonio Formula represented one advance on what had been said before. You will remember that I said that the Phase A-Phase B formula anticipated that we would stop the bombing first on the basis of agreement as to what would happen in Phase B—in which both sides would agree to do various things. In the San Antonio Formula, we stated Phase B as an assumption: 'We assume, of course," said the San Antonio Formula, "That the other side would not take advantage of our cessation of the bombing." We had in mind that what we meant by that would be the subject of negotiation and discussion with Hanoi. Naturally, we did not want them to build up infiltration and attack across the DMZ and go all-out militarily if we stopped the bombing, but stating it as an assumption was again an effort to find a way to let Hanoi proceed despite what they had been saying on the subject. Again we ran across the completely negative attitude of Hanoi in dealing with it.

Q: There wasn't any disagreement among the President's chief advisers as to what was meant by "not taking advantage?" I know Mr. Clifford later on makes the statement to the

Senate committee, I think, that it meant, you know, not that they'd stop infiltration but that they wouldn't increase it.

RUSK: No, there was no disagreement among the President's advisers on it. I personally regretted Secretary Clifford saying that before the Senate committee because that is something that ought to have been left to negotiation. That tended to undermine our bargaining position in a negotiation. It [negotiation] ought to try to spell out what we meant by the assumption that they would not take advantage of it, you see, so that what was wrong with it was not the substance of it, but the fact that it was said in advance of an actual negotiation.

Q: Reducing an option that a negotiator' might have had.

RUSK: That's right.

Q: During that whole period of time there were a number more of these individual channel contacts that you've mentioned several times. Mr. [Henry] Kissinger undertook one in the summer. Mr. Harriman pursued one with the Romanians, I think, later on in the fall. Were these any different than the earlier ones, or were they again a repetition of the same?

RUSK: We took seriously the Kissinger and the Romanian channels because we thought they were both serious as far as the intermediaries were concerned, and Kissinger handled it very well. He was responsible and accurate, and accuracy in these matters is of the greatest importance. Both of them came to nothing because there was nothing coming back from Hanoi.

Q: So, except for the nature of the channel, they weren't any more substantive than some of the earlier ones?

RUSK: No, they didn't produce any more than the others did.

Q: What about the Vietnam elections which came in that same fall? Did Mr. Johnson play any special personal role in arranging those or carrying them out?

RUSK: No, we were very pleased to see them move to elections. We had pressed them to do so because we thought that the government of Vietnam would be stronger if it were on an electoral basis, and we also had more confidence than some of the South Vietnamese did as to the results of such an election. We did not believe that the Viet Cong would make any appreciable dent on the elections despite their threats of terrorism and their propagandizing against the election itself. But we tried to leave that as much as possible to the Vietnamese processes. They had an electoral commission, and they worked out their own rules for the elections.

Of course, there has been a great tradition in Vietnam for elections at the local level. The village elections have been historically a part of the Vietnamese scene. That was true during the French period. It was true even during Japanese occupation. The villages of South Vietnam have their own village democracy, and so the idea of an election was not all that strange to them.

We felt that if the government would just take its courage in hand and hold an election that they would get a mandate from the people which was stronger than anything they had up to that point, since they rested more or less on a coup. We were very pleased to see the election and were pleased with the general conduct of the elections. We thought they were pretty fair. We had all sorts of observers there. There were hundreds of press people looking over the elections. They found very little fault with them in terms of fairness and procedures, and we felt that the election greatly strengthened the government of South Vietnam.

Q: It wasn't a matter of our forcing the South Vietnamese government to hold them?

RUSK: No. We advised them to, and we encouraged them to, but we didn't force them to.

Q: It might be a good time to make a comment on that general problem. Many of the critics seem to me to always have assumed that we could at any time call the turns for the South Vietnamese government. What was your feeling as to how far we could go in reality to control what they were doing?

RUSK: Well, we can't make and unmake governments in Vietnam. We just don't have it in our capability. It would be silly for us to take steps that would cause the South Vietnamese to turn around and start shooting at us. There are limits beyond which you can [not] go in imposing your will upon somebody. You can give advice, you can persuade, you can cajole, you can sometimes put on pressure, you can sometimes threaten. But at the end of the day, these decisions have to be made by the South Vietnamese themselves because, although we've had a substantial military presence there, we can't take over running the affairs of seventeen or eighteen million people. There are limits beyond which you simply can't go.

Q: So the idea we can make them do something, as far as you're concerned is false?

RUSK: And, particularly, we can't make and unmake governments. That's something they have to decide.

Q: How much importance in settling something like Vietnam can you expect from the kind of personal diplomacy that Mr. Johnson at least engaged in to a certain extent in such things as Glassboro that year?

RUSK: By the time this material is available, Mr. Johnson will already have published his books in which he covers Glassboro in some detail.

Q: He does cover it in detail?

RUSK: Yes. At Glassboro, President Johnson gave Mr. Kosygin a formulation to send to Hanoi somewhat along the lines of the San Antonio formula. It involved stopping the

bombing as a step toward peace, and assuming that the North Vietnamese would do some things in reciprocity for stopping the bombing. Mr. Kosygin took it and indicated he would send it to Hanoi, but again we never got an answer from Hanoi. We never got an answer through the Russians.

Q: So you don't know—

RUSK: So we don't know. In the first place, we don't know that the Russians actually sent it to Hanoi. We suspect they did, but we assume that Hanoi's response was negative because we never heard from the Russians on it. But Mr. Johnson will have already covered that in his books.

Q: Late in that year they had the first of—and this I suppose gets part of 1968 as well—first of what the press has since called the "Wise Men" meetings. I think it was in October or early November of 1967 that group met first.

RUSK: Yes.

Q: Was that a technique of getting advice that Mr. Johnson frequently turned to, or was this something new and different for that occasion?

RUSK: Governments frequently call upon people outside of government for advice, and Mr. Johnson followed that procedure. We thought that it would be useful to get together a group of very distinguished and very experienced men who had not been involved in the day-to-day operations in Vietnam, who were somewhat removed from all the detail and all of the theology of the subject, and get their general review of the situation.

Q: Who decided who would come to that meeting?

RUSK: The President and I and the Secretary of Defense primarily decided who should be invited, but it was almost an obvious list. I mean, if you looked at the names of the people there—Arthur Dean—

Q: What Richard Rovere [The American Establishment, New York, 1962] called the "Establishment"—

RUSK: That's right. They were the names that were almost self-nominated if you assumed that you wanted to constitute a group of that sort. It was Dean Acheson and Jack [John J.] McCloy and Arthur Dean and Robert Murphy and a good many others whose names the historians will have in front of them. In that first meeting the group was pretty nearly unanimous that we were on the right course. They had a strong sense of our commitment. They felt that it was necessary to see the thing through—that we should proceed in the way we were going and do what was necessary to bring about a successful result in South Vietnam.

It's interesting to see that that same group met in the spring of 1968 after the Tet offensive, and it was interesting to note that the Tet offensive had made a major impression on some of the members of that group.

Q: That is what made the impression?

RUSK: I have no doubt about it myself, just as the Tet offensive made an impression on a lot of people here in this country. Although the Tet offensive was a military disaster for the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, it had a considerable propaganda and psychological impact, and clearly shocked people here in this country and caused them to feel that the situation was getting to be hopeless. So in the second meeting of these same 'Wise Men" there were a number of them who had been so impressed by the Tet offensive that they were not nearly so sure that we ought to proceed as we were doing, and that we ought to sort of make the best peace we can. They were about evenly divided in the second

meeting, but the first meeting was very clearly a very strong impression that we were on the right track and should proceed.

Q: Was the nature of the briefings that they got different essentially?

RUSK: They were not intended to be. Of course in the second meeting the briefing reflected the setback in the countryside of the Tet offensive because, although the North Vietnamese suffered enormous casualties in the Tet offensive, it did interrupt the pacification program in the countryside rather significantly in some areas because the South Vietnamese forces were drawn back into the provincial capitals and in the district towns to give close-in defense to the populated areas that were being attacked under the Tet offensive, you see. That left some sections of the countryside pretty exposed to North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces. I think that was the type of briefing that seemed to be discouraging to some of these wise men.

Q: It wasn't a panicky-type briefing?

RUSK: No.

Q: —intended to be the same type briefing that as before?

RUSK: [We did] try to make it as factual and as direct and as realistic as possible and not try to flimflam them by false optimism or anything of that sort, but [to] give them a true picture of what the situation seemed to be.

Q: Had Secretary Clifford's growing disillusionment with some of the things we were doing by that time—did that make a difference between the two meetings?

RUSK: No.

Q: How much of a difference was there between State and Defense by February of 1968 and March?

RUSK: There was no significant difference between State and Defense by February and then March at that time.

Q: Mr. Clifford's views hadn't reached the point at that time—as they have apparently later become—that we should have begun turning back military action and—?

RUSK: That's correct. Mr. Clifford came into Office as Secretary of Defense with the reputation of being a hawk, and it was not until some time later that he began to change his own views on these matters.

Q: Was that during the period of the drafting of the President's March 31st speech then?

RUSK: No, as a matter of fact, I'm not a very good witness as to just when and how Secretary Clifford seemed to change his mind on some of these matters because he never brought these matters up at the Tuesday Luncheon, never argued with us about it in any formal way. It was just an informal kind of thing that came about through an erosion of his point of view rather than through actual proposals he made. He didn't propose, while he was Secretary of Defense, the point of view that he reflected in his Foreign Affairs article that he wrote after he left office. He never made any such proposals to the President or to me.

Q: You found out about those then, in print?

RUSK: Yes, sure.

Q: What about the drafting of that speech, and particularly the decision to put in it the partial bombing halt north of the nineteenth or twentieth parallel?

RUSK: Well, in the spring of 1968 the President wanted to review the military requirements in Vietnam, and he invited the Chiefs of Staff and General Westmoreland to—excuse me, it was General Abrams by that time—to indicate what they considered the situation to be

and what their requirements were from a military point of view. They came back with the suggestion that, in certain contingencies, it might be desirable or necessary to add another two hundred thousand men to our forces in Vietnam.

It was not a hard recommendation. It was simply some contingency planning—some possibilities that were being discussed—and so we had some discussions in Washington in February and March about whether we would move in that direction. It would involve calling up the National Guard and Reserves. It would involve, in effect, the declaration of a national emergency. It would involve many more billions on the Defense budget, and it would be a very substantial step.

Early in March, March 4th or 5th—along in there—and President Johnson will have covered this in his book—I suggested that, as an alternative to adding substantially to our forces, that we consider a very serious bombing halt, at least in those areas of North Vietnam that were not directly involved in the battlefield in the South.

Q: This goes back to your old opinion on the bombing.

RUSK: That's right. My own idea was that if we bombed only south of the twentieth parallel, that we would do that kind of bombing which was necessary to defend the area around the DMZ and the northern part of South Vietnam, [we] would give our Marines the full protection of tactical bombing in that area, but that we would not bomb up in the Hanoi-Haiphong area—which was very costly to us anyhow, and [would] try to use that as a device to try to get some talk started with Hanoi.

When I made that proposal, the President thought about it a few minutes and said, “Get on your horses; let's get something ready on that.” And so during March we prepared a plan for the cessation of the bombings except up north to the twentieth parallel, accompanied by an offer to have talks with North Vietnam.

We did not know whether they would talk on the basis of a partial stoppage of the bombing. I personally rather thought that they would because that would be a very profitable transaction for them in terms of what they were running into in Hanoi and Haiphong on their own. After all, being bombed was not a very pleasant operation.

But the President did not make a decision on that point until just a day or two before he actually gave his March 31st speech, and therefore the earlier drafts of his speech did not have that particular point in it. When you draft speeches, you don't put things in them that the President hasn't decided on; and so it was only in the last two or three days that that particular part was added to the President's speech. And, of course he added himself his own withdrawal from the Presidential campaign.

Q: So the dramatic meeting in your office that was described by the Washington Post and Newsweek and others is really sort of an anticlimax. It's really not that drama-charged at all.

RUSK: That's correct.

Q: That work had been going on for some time.

RUSK: That's correct.

Q: What finally decided the President on it? Did the 'wise men's" meeting finally make the President make this decision, do you think?

RUSK: No, I think that he wanted to move the situation to start another chapter in Vietnam if he could, and he also probably thought about it in relation to his own personal decision about whether to campaign for the Presidency. He felt that if he was going to withdraw from office that he might try this on to see if he could move the matter further toward peace while he was still President.

Q: Did you have any hint that he was going to add that last paragraph on his own?

RUSK: Yes, he talked to me about this the previous year and left me with a very clear impression that he was very seriously considering withdrawing from public life at the end of his first full term. He will have covered this in his book by the time this recording is available, but he had talked to me about the fact that no Vice President had ever succeeded to the Presidency and then run for two full terms.

He referred to the tragedy of Woodrow Wilson, who was desperately ill while he was still President. Although President Johnson didn't put it in categorical terms, I had the impression he was concerned about his health as far as running and serving out another full term was concerned.

The idea that he was driven from office by Vietnam is just not true. Long before dissent in Vietnam had become significant he had talked about withdrawing, and I think he had such advice from his wife. He had had his own views on the matter, so I was not surprised when I was told on my way to New Zealand for a meeting that his speech was going to have in it a final paragraph that would be of interest to me.

Q: And that's how you were told?

RUSK: That's how I was told, I knew then that that was what the final paragraph was going to say.

Q: Do you think anybody would have given him different advice during that period of they had known that he was definitely not going to run again?

RUSK: I don't know. My advice was not based upon that factor, although I always had in mind the possibility that he would not run again. My advice was based upon an attempt to get the Vietnam matter into a new chapter, if possible, by getting some real talks started between North Vietnam and ourselves as an alternative to building up the forces in it.I

must say that I always felt during this period that we had enough I forces out there to do the job.

I had been a Colonel on War Plans during World War II. I remember General Marshall once saying that his rule of thumb during World War II was to give a military commander half the number of troops he asked for and double his mission, and that that worked out just about right. I had the feeling that the five hundred and thirty-five thousand men that we had in Vietnam, plus the much larger forces of the South Vietnamese, plus the Allied Forces, were fully adequate to deny military victory to the Viet Cong and to the North Vietnamese. So I didn't see much point in talking about adding another two hundred thousand men, or any significant additional numbers of men, to the forces out there. We tend to luxuriate our deployment of forces for particular missions, and I felt we had enough.

Q: What about the imbroglio that immediately began over where the talks would occur? Why did that happen, really? It seemed to the public at least so much a detail. Was that a substantive issue?

RUSK: Well, we had to have a place where the South Vietnamese could come. We had to have a place where we could consult our Allies if they wanted to be consulted, and we thought it was only reasonable to have a place that was reasonably congenial to both sides. The South Vietnamese could not come to Phnom Penh or to Warsaw.

Q: They couldn't go to Warsaw?

RUSK: We asked the Poles about that, and the Poles gave us a very equivocal reply. So it was perfectly obvious that, since our object was to get the South Vietnamese at the table along with us as soon as we could, that a place like Phnom Penh and Warsaw were out of the question just as Hanoi would have been out of the question. So with all the possibilities in the world that were open to both sides, we felt that it was unreasonable on the part of the North Vietnamese to stick on Phnom Penh and Warsaw. We had offered them some

fifteen alternative sights, ourselves, probably thereby ruling out any one of the fifteen as a matter of face and prestige.

Q: Had you excluded Paris from the fifteen on purpose for that reason?

RUSK: We left out Paris partly because some of us thought that Paris would be acceptable, but partly because the President didn't want to go to Paris. He was afraid that General de Gaulle would have a negative influence on the talks—given General de Gaulle's attitude toward our role in Vietnam. As it turned out Paris proved to be very satisfactory as a site because President de Gaulle acted very correctly, and the French did everything they could to facilitate the talks. So as far as a site is concerned Paris proved to be very acceptable.

Q: Had the famous statement that's so often used against him that we'd go anywhere any time to talk peace—was that a statement Mr. Johnson added to his speech some time? That doesn't sound like State Department drafting either.

RUSK: Well, that's a matter of rhetoric. We wouldn't expect Hanoi to come to Washington, and we wouldn't expect to go to Hanoi. I myself on occasion said in the previous months “If anybody can just turn up the warm body of a North Vietnamese for me to talk to, I'll be there.” Well, that didn't mean that I would go just anywhere. This is the difference between rhetoric and actual arrangements.

Q: After the talks opened and Mr. Harriman and Mr. Vance went to Paris, did the nature of their instructions change during the balance of 1968? For example, there was a spring offensive by the enemy that Mr. Johnson reacted to publicly. Did this tend to harden our position in the early part of those talks?

RUSK: No. In general, I would think that the record will show that the basic instructions to Harriman and Vance remained pretty consistent throughout. Their object was to get the North Vietnamese to accept the South Vietnamese at the conference table, and then

on detail to get a mutual withdrawal of forces, to get release of the American prisoners of war, and to get compliance with the Laos Agreement of 1962, and other factors that would involve liquidation of the war. There might have been some changes in detail in terms of how you respond to particular points made by the North Vietnamese.

But again, certainly as of September 1969, although they are physically present and are sitting at the table in what is supposed to be talks, the North Vietnamese have made no contribution of substance to those talks at all. They're completely adamant, and we're having the same experience in the formal talks that we had in all of these preliminary and private explorations with them, so there's no sign yet that they're seriously interested in bringing this matter to a peaceable solution.

Q: There was a highly publicized lull on the battlefield in the summer of 1968. At that time did the Paris delegation think that we should do something on the ground in way of reducing activity to perhaps spur talks along?

RUSK: I don't recall recommendations that they made on that point. I've seen some reference to it since then, but I don't recall recommendations by a Paris delegation that cut across their instructions.

Q: There wasn't, at least, a major debate in the high places of government about it, or you would recall it?

RUSK: That's right. We had no serious debate about that.

Q: What finally did lead to the breakthrough that allowed the President to stop the bombing entirely in the North in October?

RUSK: A full stoppage of the bombing involved three—what we called basic facts of life. We made it clear to North Vietnam that if we stopped the bombing, the South Vietnamese were to come to the conference table; that there would be no violations of the demilitarized

zones up in the North so that the stoppage of the bombing would not endanger our forces in the northern part of South Vietnam; and there would not be continuation of rocket and other types of attacks on the major population centers.

Q: This was an explicit agreement; signed, sealed, and delivered, so to speak?

RUSK: No, as it worked out we only got a formal agreement on the South Vietnamese coming to the conference table, but we got full understanding by the North Vietnamese that we would expect them to comply with the other two points. We went over it with them eight or nine times in the course of the negotiations.

Q: These were in the secret talks now?

RUSK: In the secret talks. We went over these three points with them eight or nine times. We took it up with the Russians and made these three facts of life perfectly clear to the Russians. Before we finally stopped the bombing in October, President Johnson communicated with the Russians and said, “Now here are the three facts of life. We're not calling them conditions. We're just saying that no President can stop the bombing unless these three things are taken into account, unless these three things occur.” And the President said to the Russians, 'We have some doubt as to whether the North Vietnamese fully understand the importance of these three points.” The Russians came back saying, “Your doubts on that score are unfounded,” which we took to be a confirmation that the North Vietnamese did understand and did in fact accept these three facts of life as being essential to the stopping of the bombing.

Q: Now, what time in frame is this? Is this early or mid-October?

RUSK: We went to the Russians in mid-October, I think it was. By that time the matter had begun to gel, because by early October it began to be apparent that the North Vietnamese were going to accept the South Vietnamese at the conference table.

Q: That was the key that had to be overcome.

RUSK: That's right.

Q: Well, what delayed the arrangement then from going into effect until October 31st, I think, when the bombing was actually ordered stopped?

RUSK: Well, for one—to pin down these points—it was not until the middle or later October that the North Vietnamese specifically agreed to the presence of the South Vietnamese at the table, although we had had some sort of hints—some reason to believe early in October that they would in fact do so. We had to pin that down, and then there were some problems of timing—the relation between the stopping of the bombing and the timing of announcements, the number of days that would elapse between the bombing [halt] and announcement of a meeting at which the South Vietnamese could be present, and things of that sort. There was a good deal of fussing around about detail, and it took a little time to sort those out.

Q: What about the South Vietnamese? Were they explicitly committed to attend at that point?

RUSK: Well, we thought that they were all on board. As a matter of fact, we had an agreed joint communique worked out with President Thieu and President Johnson in which the announcement would be made, but then when we got around to the point of being ready to go with it, President Thieu decided he had to consult people in his own government. When he took it up with his Cabinet and some of his legislative leaders, he got cold feet and decided that he couldn't go ahead with it.

Well, it was too late by then. We had already told the Russians, and we had already agreed with the North Vietnamese, and so we had to go ahead even though the South

Vietnamese were not prepared to issue a joint statement and were not prepared immediately to come to Paris. We had quite a fight with them about that.

Q: Was there any importance played by the celebrated activity of certain Americans, notably Madame [Anna] Chennault, in connection with her political campaign to try to keep the South Vietnamese from getting on board, or staying on board?

RUSK: It's hard to know with certainty whether the South Vietnamese were playing American electoral politics at that time. It's possible that they were. It so, this was very reprehensible. I think that there's no doubt that Madame Chennault was trying to influence them not to come to the conference table, and that she probably had electoral considerations in mind.

I have no reason to think that Mr. Nixon, personally, was directly involved in this kind of a thing; but it may be that the South Vietnamese on their own felt that if they agreed to come to Paris this would give Hubert Humphrey a big boost and that as between Humphrey and Nixon they would prefer Nixon. Whether they still think so or not, I don't know.

Q: They may have had second thoughts, but it's too late now. But there was no connection between Madame Chennault and the Republican leadership—?

RUSK: Well, I just don't know what connection there was. As I said, I never had any evidence that Mr. Nixon himself was directly involved in that.

Q: After the talks began in November and December, did Mr. Harriman and Mr. Vance then recommend that we reverse our order to General Abrams that maximum pressure on the ground be exerted?

RUSK: The record would have to show that. I myself don't recall that they did. I would be inclined to think that had they done so, I would have recalled it. But that could be looked at in terms of the cables that came from Harriman and Vance back to Washington.

Q: So essentially Mr. Johnson's Administration and your tenure as Secretary of State left the talks open but with no real change in the situation from the time they opened?

RUSK: That's right.

Q: Did the new Administration adequately get briefed from the old, in other words, did they come to you for the advice—?

RUSK: Well, during this period of the campaign President Johnson kept the candidate Nixon fully informed of what was going on. I had some briefing sessions with him myself, for example. On this matter of stopping the bombing, President Johnson was in touch with all three of the principal presidential candidates, and, in fact, had them on a conference telephone call before the actual announcement was made to tell them what had gone on. They had all agreed to it about ten days before that, so as far as the candidates were concerned, this was a national decision.

This was a national action for which the President took responsibility, but on which the candidates were informed. The President did everything that he could to insure that he would not do anything that would be obnoxious to any one of the principal candidates during this period.

Q: And certainly, so far as you were concerned, there was nothing about the change of Administrations that necessarily would have changed the nature of the talks or interrupted the machinery of the Paris talks at all?

RUSK: That's correct, and that has proved to be the case since the Administration has changed. President Nixon and Secretary [William] Rogers have continued those talks in Paris in about the same way that I suspect they would have gone on had President Johnson remained in office.

Q: There's probably a whole lot of detail that I may in one of our subsequent sessions ask permission to come back to after I've had a chance to read through this transcript, but so far as the direct questions that I've sent you in advance this seems to be about it.

In the line of getting what was in your mind, though—just a sort of general speculative question—if you had known in, say, early 1963 or '64 what the ultimate cost of lives and resources and dollars and public opinion was going to be with our activity in Vietnam, do you think looking back that you would have advised any differently?

RUSK: Well, every American casualty takes a little piece out of those who carry the responsibility, and I've felt that it was a great tragedy that it was necessary to ask our young men to undertake this fighting after all that has happened in the last four decades.

On the other hand, the overriding problem before all of mankind is to prevent World War III. We learned the lessons from World War II and wrote them into the United Nations Charter and into our great security treaties. The principal lesson we learned from World War II is that if a course of aggression is allowed to gather momentum that it continues to build and leads eventually to a general conflict. This was very much in our minds when we wrote collective security into the United Nations Charter, and when we concluded such treaties as the SEATO Treaty.

Our problem is to prevent World War III. I said we learned the lessons of World War II, but no one is going to learn any lessons from World War III. There won't be enough left, and so the problem is to prevent World War III before it comes about. If I had thought myself that there was no connection between Vietnam and preventing World War III, I might have had a different view about Vietnam. But if there is that connection, and the historians will have to judge this, then the effort made in South Vietnam was very much worthwhile.

There's another point that is highly relevant. Two-thirds of the world's people live in Asia. Half of them are free; half of them are in Communist China. During this period in which we

have made a stand in Vietnam, the free nations of Asia have made remarkable progress, not only in terms of what is happening in each particular country but in the cohesion which has been developing among the free nations themselves in regional activities, such as the ASPAC grouping of Pacific powers, and such as the ASEAN grouping of the Southeast Asian powers, and the Asian Development Bank, and the initiatives taken by Japan to stimulate agricultural production. All sorts of things have been happening out there, so that behind the cover of our resistance in Vietnam has been a steady strengthening of the forces of free Asia.

Now, they face the prospect of living next to a billion Chinese armed with nuclear weapons and proclaiming a doctrine of militant Communism—militant world revolution. It was my hope that the Vietnamese experience would give them some time in which they could strengthen themselves to be able to survive the implicit pressures of a Communist China and maintain some peace in Asia of the sort that is conformable to the national interests of the United States. Now, this is something that only the historian will have a chance to tell about. That has not worked out as yet. That has not evolved, but if the free nations of Asia ten years from now are surviving as independent nations—making their own decisions about their own national life and their own orientation in world affairs—then the Vietnamese experience will have been worth the tragic price that has been paid for it. If, on the other hand, we are moving down the chute—the chute toward World War III, then at least we can say that we tried to stop it by stopping it in Vietnam.

I just myself hope in September 1969 that the North Vietnamese will not win on the home front in the United States, and that an internal collapse of morale in the United States will not give them what they've been unable to win on the battlefield in Vietnam.

Q: I gather you're not too worried about what the historians are likely to decide in twenty years if indeed we do avoid the holocaust—

RUSK: It depends on how the story comes out. It depends upon what kind of people we are. The American people are now in the process of deciding whether we can see this thing through and insist that it come to a reasonable conclusion so that the nations of Southeast Asia can live their own lives and that there can be a situation there that the United States can look upon with reasonable contentment. If the Communists are allowed to overrun South Vietnam and Laos and Cambodia and Thailand and on beyond, then I think we're on the way to World War III.

Q: That's probably a good place to stop for today if it's satisfactory with you.

RUSK: All right.

(Interview continues, January 2, 1970)

Q: This is our third session taking place on January 2, 1970. Let's begin, Mr. Secretary, with a couple of questions that have occurred to me in reading your prior transcripts, one involving particularly the coordination between our military effort in Vietnam and the political goals we sought.

Some of the critics are saying that the Johnson Administration never successfully coordinated the military with the political effort, and that the military declined to push the pacification effort and that the Administration didn't force it to do so. Would you comment on that general subject area?

RUSK: First, let's talk about coordination back in Washington. I think it's important for the historian to bear in mind that the principal decisions made about Vietnam were made at the Tuesday Luncheon; and at those luncheons President Johnson had with him the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of Central Intelligence, and his own Special Assistant for National Security Affairs. We talked about all aspects of Vietnam at those luncheons—military, political economical, psychological—and decisions were taken with those who were carrying responsibility for

all aspects Of the Vietnam struggle. I don't believe there was any lack of coordination as far as Washington was concerned. President Johnson frequently would say that his right arm was Secretary McNamara in pursuing the military aspect of the Job in Vietnam, and his directive to Secretary McNamara was to get the military job done.

His left arm was his Secretary of State who was expected to try to find a peaceful solution to Vietnam if possible. Now during the period when President Johnson was President, and the historian will find a good deal of this in President Johnson's book, we had literally dozens of contacts—discussions—with Hanoi trying to probe the possibilities of a peaceful settlement. Those efforts were always known to, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Similarly, when we were adopting bombing targets, and when we were authorizing bombing operations, those plans were always brought into the Tuesday luncheon; and the Secretary of State had a chance to comment on them and frequently did so that as far as Washington was concerned there was pretty good coordination.

For a time President Johnson had Mr. Robert Komer in the White House to coordinate what was called “the other war,” that is, the political-psychological-economic side of the war, in order that all the agencies in Washington that were concerned about that aspect of the war would pull together. The Department of Agriculture was interested in agricultural developments; the Department of Commerce in trade, and the Department of the Treasury in the economic situation. Komer's job was to coordinate all those activities as far as Washington was concerned.

Now, in the field. In Vietnam the Ambassador was the President's principal representative, and it was his job to insure that the military and political and psychological operations were coordinated on the ground . That was not easy, because we were expecting the South Vietnamese not only to fight a war but to build a nation in the process. It isn't easy to improve education and improve agriculture and restrain inflation and do all these things

in the middle of a war, particularly a guerrilla-type war which subjected the government structure in the countryside to continued harassment. It's hard to build schools when school teachers are being assassinated. The Deputy Ambassador in Saigon was the man who was primarily responsible for that job of coordination, reporting to Ambassador Bunker or Ambassador Lodge.

When you're trying to move a complex situation on a broad front, there are always going to be problems of coordination, and so I won't claim that coordination was perfect but it wasn't as bad as some people seem to think. There was no instance where it was a case of not being informed as to what was going on and what was being attempted. The military kept very closely in touch with the political and other developments. The State Department kept very closely in touch with military developments. The first thing I did every morning when I got into the office was to read the detailed military report of the day before in Vietnam, so I kept always very closely in touch with military developments because they were a crucial part of the total effort out there.

Q: And the military was not then basically out of sympathy with the pacification effort in such a way that made it difficult to make progress in that area?

RUSK: No. The military had a lot to learn about how you fight a guerrilla war. During the 1950's the South Vietnamese armed force, such as it was—it was not very large during that period—was trained more or less for conventional war—divisions against divisions. That seemed to be the nature of the threat posed by the organization of several divisions in North Vietnam. It was not specially trained to handle guerrilla warfare.

Guerrilla warfare has complications of its own. It's one of the most difficult kinds of warfare to meet, because the defense—the South Vietnamese—had responsibility for protecting a very large number of places. There were forty-three provincial capitals, there were two hundred and forty district towns, and the government held all of those. Now, any one of those was subject to being attacked by guerrillas at any time because the guerrillas did

not have to seize and hold a position. They only had to cause trouble and hit and run—strike and fall back. It meant an enormous commitment of forces to protect the positions that were being held by the government, whereas the guerrilla was free to move around, so that the defense in a guerrilla war situation has a special burden and involves a great deal of manpower.

When the North Vietnamese sent their regular divisions into South Vietnam, you did get a certain amount of conventional war in the classical sense. You had large unit actions against each other in the search-and destroy operations, and sometimes during the TET offensive of 1968. But I'm not sure in 1970 that we yet have learned all we need to know about how you deal with guerrilla war situations.

Q: Certainly we still have problems from time to time.

RUSK: That's right. I think it's a very subtle, complex, difficult kind of struggle to carry out.

Q: Mentioning the present—early 1970—President Nixon's policy has gained the title 'Vietnamization." How different do you consider that from what you and President Johnson were trying to do during the time that you were in office?

RUSK: President Johnson followed the policy of building up the South Vietnamese armed forces, and if the historian will look at the rate of increase of the South Vietnamese forces—say, from 1965 onward—he will find that there was a very striking increase in the actual numbers, size, equipment, of South Vietnamese forces throughout that period. There were some problems about the rate at which we could turnover responsibility to the South Vietnamese, particularly in matters of equipment.

For example, on the M-16 rifle we were very late in producing the M-16 even for our own troops, and we felt that our own troops had first priority on So sophisticated and complicated a weapon as the M-16 rifle. We only had one producer of that rifle. They were producing only something like—I don't know—thirty thousand a month or something—

this is a figure that can be checked. It was not until 1967-68 that new producers were called in to make additional M-16 rifles. That then got the production situation in a position where we could begin to issue M-16 rifles to the South Vietnamese forces, and the Nixon Administration inherited that increase in productive capacity.

As far as helicopters are concerned, we wanted to turnover more helicopter responsibility to the South Vietnamese, but the training time required to train helicopter pilots was very long. It was a minimum of a year and possibly more. The supply of helicopters was limited for awhile to those that were absolutely essential for the U.S. units that were directly involved. Now, as South Vietnamese pilots become trained, and as helicopters can be issued to the South Vietnamese forces, then they can take over more responsibility than they could otherwise.

My guess is that had President Johnson continued in office and continued the policies that he had in chain at the time he left office, that he might well have brought about some reduction in U.S. forces himself. Whether he would have done it exactly like President Nixon, I have no way of knowing at this point, but when you look at the increase in the regular forces, the popular and regional forces, and the local defense units in South Vietnam, you'll see that from 1965 onward there was a regular and steady increase in available military manpower in South Vietnam.

Q: [You] just didn't call it Vietnamization?

RUSK: We didn't call it Vietnamization because so long as we were in office we were not actually withdrawing U.S. forces on the theory that we were turning over responsibility to the South Vietnamese.

I think that it was unfortunate that the term Americanization of the war caught on as much as it did, because throughout the war the South Vietnamese carried a very heavy part of the struggle. Their casualties, particularly if you include the local forces, were always significantly larger than American casualties. For example, when you look at the

figures on wounded, the South Vietnamese only counted as wounded those who turned up in hospitals, whereas the Americans would count anybody who had a scratch on an earlobe due to enemy action as a wounded. Eighty-five percent of the American wounded returned to service—returned to duty—so that we counted everybody, and the South Vietnamese only counted those that were serious enough to go into a hospital. I think if the historian will look at the casualty figures, he will realize that at no time did the United States ever Americanize the war to the point of carrying the sole burden of the war. The South Vietnamese were always carrying a very large part of it, and this is reflected in their casualties—not only the casualties they received themselves but the casualties they inflicted on the enemy.

Q: The other part of the Nixon program, to go along with that, is apparently the change from the battle tactics of maximum feasible pressure, or search-and-destroy. Was that a decision that was seriously considered before you left office that might also have been made had the Administration remained in office?

RUSK: We had some debates on search-and-destroy as a technique, as a tactic. The principal purpose of search-and-destroy was to keep the enemy forces, particularly his battalions and regiments, at a distance from the cities. We had no desire to sit back and wait for the enemy to make his own choices as to which towns and cities he would attack, and then find ourselves in an urban war where the civilians would take a great deal of the burden of the fight and where house-to-house fighting would be very mean and difficult. The idea was to catch him while he was still out in the countryside where you could fight him with a minimum of disruption to the life of the country, and where artillery and air bombardment and other weapons could be brought to bear much more effectively than could be done if you waited until he came into the cities.

We debated that at considerable length at times, and, in general, left the actual tactics to the commander in the field. We felt it was not possible back in Washington to give detailed guidance as to how our commanders would handle their battalions and regiments.

We pretty well left that up to them. We hoped that they would combine with their search-and destroy action on the pacification front, so that the countryside would in fact become pacified and that the population of the country would be increasingly secure from Viet Cong raids.

Q: The rest of Asia sometimes, I'm afraid, gets overlooked in the emphasis on Vietnam, but it's a very important area obviously. Was there a major attempt during the Johnson Administration to move toward regularizing our relations with Communist China in any way?

RUSK: We, in our talks in Warsaw, took various steps to try to improve relations with Peking. We repeated the effort made by the Eisenhower Administration to bring about an exchange of newspapermen. We proposed the exchange of scientists, scholars, of professional men—doctors. We proposed the exchange of weather information. We proposed the exchange of basic plant materials in the basic food crops such as rice and wheat, things of that sort, but we got nowhere with it because Peking always came back with the answer that there was nothing to discuss until we are ready to surrender Taiwan.

This has been the great problem about improving relations with mainland China. They insist that Taiwan, sometimes known as Formosa, is a part of China—their China. They don't recognize that China was split in a civil war and that the Republic of China on Taiwan has an existence of its own. They claim that the promise of the Cairo declaration to deliver Taiwan to China meant that we should now deliver Taiwan to mainland China since they claim that the People's Republic of China is the successor to the China to which Taiwan was promised. This simple attitude forces everyone to ask themselves what they're prepared to do about Taiwan, because if you're not prepared to surrender these thirteen million people on Taiwan to mainland China, then you're not in business with China—with Peking. Peking won't talk to you, won't do anything.

My impression in January 1970 is that if the United States were to offer tomorrow morning to recognize Peking without the surrender of Taiwan that Peking would turn it down, and so that has been the bone in the throat of efforts to improve relations with Peking. Now, the Nixon Administration has renewed these efforts, and as of today we still don't know whether representatives to Peking will resume their discussions in Warsaw, or in some other capital.

Q: Are the Warsaw talks—or were they in your Administration—a two-way street, or did we just get a sort of stony silence from them? Do they make any response at all to our overtures other than just rhetorical criticisms?

RUSK: We never got any forthcoming response to any of the proposals we made. We got no satisfactory answer on a few remaining Americans left in mainland China. We never got any positive response to the various proposals we had made about various types of exchanges that I've mentioned. The main theme of the Chinese representatives in the Warsaw talks was always that we must abandon the Chiang Kai-shek clique. We must turn Formosa over to the mainland, and get our forces out of Asia. So it was a very stiff set of talks without any real give and take—without any real exchange. It was a case of talking at each other but no real discussion with each other.

Q: You've been involved with the problem of Red China since its successful creation in the late '40's very closely. Is the American political climate essentially different regarding what it is possible to do politically with Red China today than it was, say, in the early '50's when you were in the Department?

RUSK: I think that there's a significant difference. I think there's more flexibility in the general attitude of the American people toward mainland China now than there Was back in those days. On several occasions—and the historian will have to check this—on several occasions the Congress passed resolutions back in those days opposing the recognition of Peking.

You see, when the British recognized Peking and we did not—this was before the outbreak of the Korean War; this was 1949—I was then Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs—it was my impression that British and American policy might come together again on the basis of the conduct of Peking. If Peking behaved itself and acted like a loyal member of the international community of nations—lived at peace with its neighbors—it was my impression that eventually American policy would move toward the recognition of Peking but that if Peking acted in a militant fashion and demonstrated it was going to be a constant source of trouble in Asia, that British policy might then move toward the American point of view.

Well, the Chinese intervened in Korea. Mainland China is the only nation that has ever been called an aggressor by the United Nations. It was my impression that these events would cause the British to pull back on their recognition and maybe break diplomatic relations with mainland China, but they didn't. I understand that Prime Minister Churchill at one time wanted to do that—pull back—but the Foreign Office wouldn't let him do it.

The British also were preoccupied with the problem of Hong Kong. That was a kind of hostage to British policy so they were influenced by the desire to maintain a position in Hong Kong, if at all possible. Hong Kong is not defensible from a military point of view and depends upon the acquiescence of mainland China in the British occupation of Hong Kong.

Q: Even their water supply now, I think, comes from inside mainland China.

RUSK: I think that's right. Also, they buy vegetables, and they buy other stuff. There's a very heavy trade between Hong Kong and mainland China.

Q: But the point is, I guess, that it's not fear of domestic political reaction that prevent changes in our China policy?

RUSK: No. I think that if it were possible to find a reasonable basis on which to improve relations with mainland China that the American people would be glad to see it happen. There will be some discontent. There's still a small so-called China lobby, I suppose, but it's of no consequence and was not during the Kennedy and Johnson years. The issues really turned on whether or not we were prepared to surrender Taiwan to mainland China.

Q: Why does it seem, as it does to me—perhaps not entirely accurately—that the academic expertise in the country—the China scholars, and so on—all are of the opinion, or virtually all, that our China policy is not very imaginative or well advised? Why are they out of phase with the policy makers in this regard, if they are?

RUSK: I think one of the reasons is that they live in the world of opinion, and the policy maker lives in the world of decision. The policy maker is faced with the fact that thus far there is not much opportunity to improve relations with mainland China without the surrender of Formosa, and that is a major obstacle which the American government just hasn't been able to contemplate. It's not for us to surrender these thirteen million people on Taiwan. They're not ours to surrender in the first place, and it would be a major act of perfidy if we were to do so, or attempt to do so.

I think another thing is that some of the so-called China scholars would like to see us improve our own position by making a gesture, such as toward recognition, even though Peking turned it down. In the world of decision you are not enchanted by empty gestures. If we were to recognize Peking, it would cause a considerable amount of pain to non-Communists in Asia—people like the South Koreans, and of course the people on Taiwan, the Thais, and others in Southeast Asia, the Filipinos. The question is whether you, by making a gesture, give pain to some of your closest friends without accomplishing anything.

Q: When it's just a gesture.

RUSK: Just a gesture. So I think that those would be the principal points.

Then I think, too, that in government we have looked upon the Chinese as being very militant in their orientation. What they say is very tough, and they have broken with the Soviet Union over the issue of militancy in support of the world revolution. We know that the Chinese have been active in Burma, sending arms and men across the northeastern frontier of Burma. We know that the Chinese have been causing trouble in eastern India among the tribal areas of eastern India. We know that the Chinese have been sending agents into northern Thailand and are building a road down through Laos aimed at Thailand. So people in government are necessarily concerned about the militancy of Peking.

The scholars are inclined to say, “Oh, well, don't listen to what they say. They don't do anything about it.” They're inclined to say that Peking, in fact, is following a policy of caution, and that we should not draw as sharp a distinction as we tend to draw between the Soviet Union and Peking on problems of doctrine. Only the historian will be able to sort that out because it will depend upon what happens in the next several years in Asia.

You see, at the present time peace in Asia is being frustrated because of the more than fifty regiments of North Vietnamese troops that are attacking South Vietnam, by more than forty thousand North Vietnamese troops operating in Laos, by North Vietnamese trained guerrillas operating in Laos, by North Vietnamese trained guerrillas operating in northeast Thailand. Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia has publicly complained about the assistance which Hanoi and Peking have been giving to guerrillas in Cambodia, and there's the most neutral of all the neutralist countries.

I mentioned the men and arms coming across the northeast frontier of Burma, and the activity of the Chinese in eastern India. Almost every week infiltrators come from North Korea across the thirty-eighth parallel into South Korea to cause trouble. There's no doubt of the fact that these Communist countries in Asia—Peking, Hanoi, North Korea—are

acting on a militant basis. They're causing trouble to their neighbors, and sometimes the scholars are inclined to put that to one side, to downgrade the importance of this activity.

There'd be peace in Asia if these Asian Communists were to live a normal life alongside of their neighbors there and leave them alone, because there's no non-Communist country in Asia that has any designs on moving against the Communist countries of Asia.

Q: You mentioned Laos there a couple of times. During the Kennedy Administration, I suppose that was the chief public hot spot. Did Mr. Johnson as Vice President have any major responsibilities that involved Laos during that time?

RUSK: He kept well-informed about Laos, but I don't recall that he took a very active part in the basic decisions that we were making about Laos. He did inherit the bitter disappointment of the Kennedy Administration in the failure of the Geneva accords of 1962 on Laos.

When President Kennedy became President, he took a long look at Laos and decided that the best solution for Laos was to get all foreigners out of that country—leave it as a land-locked buffer. The Laotian people themselves were gentle, civilized people who obviously had no interest in killing each other. The battles that were fought were not very bloody; a few big explosions made quite a battle. I remember one incident when the two sides left the battlefield in Laos to go to a water festival together for about ten days and then went back to the battlefield, so we felt that if they were left alone, that Laos would provide no threat of any sort to anybody and might be a useful buffer between North Vietnam and the rest of Southeast Asia. President Kennedy talked to Chairman Khrushchev about that in Vienna in June 1961, and Khrushchev seemed to agree that the answer to Laos was for everybody to get out and leave it alone.

So we went to the Geneva Conference, which had already started, and made several important concessions to get an agreement on Laos. For example, we accepted the man as Prime Minister that the Soviet Union recognized as prime minister. He was not

our prime minister. We accepted Prince Souvanna Phouma, the neutralist, as the Prime Minister of a coalition government. We accepted a coalition government, one-third of which was to be Pathet Lao, Communist in character. We accepted the international neutralization of Laos, and we accepted the idea that we'd get all of our people out of there. We had about six hundred people there at the time.

But the trouble is that we did not get any performance out of Hanoi on those Laos accords for a single day. The agreement specified that all foreign forces would leave the country. North Vietnamese forces did not leave the country. The agreement specified that Laos would not be used as an infiltration route into other countries. At no time did Hanoi stop using Laos as an infiltration corridor into South Vietnam. The Pathet Lao—the Communists—did not permit the coalition government to exercise authority in those areas of Laos held by the Communists; and they did not permit the International Control Commission to exercise its functions in those areas of Laos held by the Communists. So President Kennedy was bitterly disappointed by the failure of the Laos accords to achieve their purpose, and President Johnson inherited that failure and our inability to get any measure of compliance by Hanoi. The historian will want to try to find out what the attitude of Russia was toward Laos during all of this period.

I had the impression at the time of the Geneva Conference on Laos in 1962 that the Russians were acting in reasonably good faith on the basis of the agreement which seems to have been reached at the meeting in Vienna in June between President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev, but we never got any help from the Russians in getting performance on the Laos accords of '62. The historian may want to inquire as to whether it just happened that the Russians lost considerable influence in Hanoi at about the time that the Geneva accords of '62 were concluded, and were not able to bring Hanoi to comply for fear that this would simply drive Hanoi into the arms of Peking. I think this may be one of those points where the Russo-Chinese rivalry led to a frustration of the Geneva accords

on Laos, and led to the inability or unwillingness of the Russians to try to press Hanoi to comply with them.

Q: Did Mr. Johnson have to make any new decisions on Laos in the first year or so after he came to the Presidency?

RUSK: By the time President Johnson became President, the main effort of North Vietnam was clearly aimed at South Vietnam so that President Johnson was greatly preoccupied by the South Vietnamese aspect of it. Of course, the infiltration through Laos was a part of the Vietnam problem, but the North Vietnamese themselves concentrated more on South Vietnam than on Laos. Had North Vietnam thrown against Laos a fraction—a fourth—of the effort that they threw against South Vietnam, they might well have overrun Laos and seized it completely. Why they did not do that I don't know. It may be that by the time this material is available it will be known that North Vietnam did in fact expect to pick up Laos as a part of its total program in Southeast Asia.

Q: I read just, I think, last week that our bombing program in Laos actually began in about May of '64. Was that a Presidential-type decision that had been made?

RUSK: Yes, the bombing program in Laos was always the matter of highest policy consideration and was worked out in consultation with the government of Laos—Prince Souvanna Phouma—at all times.

Q: And with his approval?

RUSK: With his approval.

Q: You had mentioned the beginning of the bombing program in Laos and the acceptance of that by the Laotian government. Why has it been possible for those who are criticizing our policy in Southeast Asia to refer to Laos as a secret war?

RUSK: Well, there's a very simple reason for that. Prime Souvanna Phouma has been very anxious to maintain the formalities of the Geneva Accords of 1962, and it was his judgment that he did not want to publicly talk about American air operations in Laos. He wanted to maintain the theory that it's only the North Vietnamese who are acting militarily in violation of the Geneva Accords of 1962.

Our view was that since the North Vietnamese were acting militarily against Laos and abusing Laos with infiltration into South Vietnam, that that suspended the military clauses of the Laos Accords of 1962 and that it was perfectly appropriate for us to take action in Laos—among other things to defend South Vietnam. But Souvanna Phouma wanted to keep it quiet, and it was solely for that reason that the American side has been as quiet about Lao as it has been—no other reason.

Q: But the Administration did make a decision that our commitment to Laos was in the nature of being as strong as our commitment to Vietnam in the sense that we were pledged to put our force in there?

RUSK: After the Geneva Accords in 1962 there was some doubt about that, because in those Accords Laos promised that it would not call upon the protection of any other group of countries, such as SEATO, and we agreed to that declaration of neutrality by Laos so that it's a very questionable thing that the South Asia Treaty now applies to Laos in the same way that it applies to South Vietnam. You see, Laos was one of the protocol states of the Southeast Asia Treaty.

Q: They wrote themselves out of the protocol—

RUSK: But they wrote themselves out of the protocol, and we accepted their writing themselves out of it. So in the technical sense of law and politics, I think our commitment is somewhat different than is our commitment to South Vietnam.

Q: I see. How does that apply then to Thailand? Shortly after you left office, there was a public outcry regarding secret commitments that the Senate said they had discovered that had been made to Thailand without their knowledge. Were there new agreements made with Thailand during the Johnson Administration that didn't previously exist in the way of commitment?

RUSK: As far as Thailand is concerned it is a main member—signatory member—of the Southeast Asia Treaty so that there is no doubt at all about the treaty commitment as far as Thailand is concerned. Furthermore, Thailand was clearly covered by the August 1964 resolution on Southeast Asia, the so-called Tonkin Gulf Resolution.

In this SEATO military organization a good deal of contingency planning went on, just as it goes on in NATO, in CENTO, and in other places-= Plan I, Plan V, Plan VIII, that kind of thing, were worked out simply On a contingency basis as happens in any alliance. Those contingency plans are not ordinarily made public. They're not ordinarily discussed with members of Congress. They're based solidly upon commitments undertaken by the Congress. There was only one negative vote on the South Asia Treaty when it was approved by the Senate. There were only two negative votes in the entire Congress on the August '64 resolution which reinforced the Southeast Asia Treaty commitment.

Q: So these agreements were really just contingency plans based on agreements that you feel were adequately known?

RUSK: Contingency plans based upon policies which had been thoroughly discussed with the Congress [and] on which Congress had acted.

Q: So there was no evasion of the Congressional prerogatives in that sense?

RUSK: I don't know of any secret political understandings with Thailand. There was secret military contingency planning, but I don't know of anything that went beyond the Southeast Asia Treaty. The so-called Rusk-Tanat communique—which simply spelled out that the

obligations of SEATO were both joint and several—was made public at the time, and was entered into after consultation with members of the Foreign Relations Committee.

You see, the SEATO Treaty says that—Article 4, paragraph 1—in the event of aggression by armed attack against a member of the treaty that each state shall take steps to meet the common danger—each signatory, each party, I believe the treaty calls it. Now that meant that the responsibilities were individual as well as collective. It was, of course, up to the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization if possible to move as a group to deal with an aggression against a member of the organization, but in the absence of group action, individual responsibilities still were there. Each party shall take steps to meet the common danger, and so the Rusk-Tanat communique made that clear, because at that time France was on the way out of SEATO, and the question was whether there was a veto in SEATO by France in the event of aggression against Thailand. In order to settle down the Thais, we simply confirmed that these obligations were individual as well as collective in character, but there was nothing secret about them.

Q: The allies that we have in the Far East who participated in Vietnam are frequently called mercenaries because of our contributions to their troop support. Was that a necessary prerequisite to their cooperation—that we bear the cost—perhaps even beyond the actual cost of the troop use?

RUSK: That is a phrase which has been used by some of the opponents of our effort in Southeast Asia. To me it has little substance. For example, Lend Lease during World War II, which was massive in character, did not make mercenaries out of the British and the Russians or the French. We have the resources to be able to help countries that are in trouble, and so we help to pay the bill. We did the same thing in the Korean war. I would compare what we've been doing in Southeast Asia to what we did during World War II under Lend Lease.

Q: Our payments haven't gone beyond the military necessities of the power concerned? We haven't paid more than the bill for their participation?

RUSK: No, but bear in mind that quite apart from what they were doing in South Vietnam, some of these countries had other obligations that they had to be concerned about. For example, North Korea is very menacing these days towards South Korea, and it has been important to help the South Koreans improve their own armed forces with additional manpower and additional equipment and things of that sort. That requires military aid.

The Thais have a pretty good struggle going on up in the northeast part of their own country, and they needed additional materials such as helicopters. They needed additional artillery—things of that sort—and they needed to increase the size of their own armed forces so that there were needs which went beyond the actual needs of troops positioned in South Vietnam to which we made a contribution. But to call that bribery, or to say that that translates these people into mercenaries, is just a part of the polemics of the South Vietnamese debate.

Q: It's not a case of those powers saying, 'Well, we won't play unless you perform," this type of thing— where they threaten non-support unless we give them additional aid.

RUSK: I have no doubt that the British, the French, and the Russians said that to us during the Lend Lease negotiations.

Q: They may have, as a matter of fact.

RUSK: There's nothing unusual in that. It's a matter of capability as well as will so there may have been some discussion of that. I don't recall. No one ever said that to me, but implicit in the situation was that they had various needs and if they were to meet those needs they would need assistance, and we were in a position to give them assistance.

Q: It's frequently said that those allies and those elsewhere in the world, as well, who criticized our policy in Southeast Asia publicly were sometimes privately telling us that they were glad we were there and didn't want us to leave. Is that an accurate impression?

RUSK: We have not had public criticism of any importance from those who have troops in South Vietnam—Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, the South Koreans. We might get some criticism at times when they think that we're not going to see it through to a successful conclusion. They may be a little nervous about our will, particularly when they listen to the domestic debate in the United States on the subject and listen to some United States Senators. There are others in Asia who would not publicly give us support, but who privately realized that they have a stake in the successful outcome of what we were trying to do in South Vietnam. I have no doubt myself that if we suddenly were to abandon South Vietnam, that this would cause dismay in places like India and Burma and Indonesia and Malaysia, and even Cambodia.

Q: They made that clear to us in various ways?

RUSK: I can't say that each one of them did. It would be embarrassing to some of them for me to try to put words in their mouths on this matter. I don't think Burma ever said that to us, but some Indian leaders have; some Indonesian leaders have; certainly the Malaysians have said that. Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia has never said that in so many words.

Q: Some of them are just not in a position to say it at all.

RUSK: That's right.

Q: President Nixon just concluded with Japan an agreement concerning Okinawa that seemed remarkably easy, at least in its public manifestations. What was the status of that problem during the years of President Kennedy and President Johnson?

RUSK: First, let me say that when I was Assistant Secretary of State back in the Truman Administration I tried at that time to arrange for the transfer of Okinawa back to Japan on the basis that our interests in the Far East turned crucially on Japan, and it was far better to have a good strong relationship with Japan than it was to hang on to a little base there at the expense of our relations with Japan. But I was unable to get the various elements of the American government willing to do that in the Truman Administration, and we never moved on it.

Now, as far as the Kennedy-Johnson period is concerned, we were concerned that Okinawa was important as a base while there was a threat to the security of free Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia but also we had our eyes on Korea. We felt that it was not possible for us to return Okinawa to Japan under conditions which would jeopardize its position as a base. President Kennedy was very resistant on this point, much more so than President Johnson. He told the Prime Minister of Japan that he didn't want the position of Okinawa to be nibbled away, and that he would be willing to take one or two steps to improve the situation provided the Prime Minister would tell him that he was not trying to move by minor steps toward the reversion of Okinawa to Japan. The Prime Minister gave him that assurance at that time.

My own personal feeling was, in the latter part of the Johnson Administration, that the time had come to turn Okinawa back to Japan—that it would not be possible for the United States to hold onto a position where it would have to use police methods to subdue the local population if the local population wanted some other political settlement. My guess is that had Johnson remained in office that he would have done the same thing that President Nixon did.

Q: It's just a matter of when the Japanese came [to the U.S. to ask reversion?]

RUSK: When they came, yes. Now, a good deal will turn upon the specific arrangements that are made with Japan about the use of Okinawa as a base. It isn't important as a

place for storing nuclear weapons. That is of no great consequence, but to have Okinawa available to assist in the defense of Korea is very important. That should also be important to Japan, and I would hope that the arrangement would include provisions that Okinawa would be available to support South Korea. My guess is that the Japanese will go a long way to accommodate our needs for bases on Okinawa now that they have the political reversion of Okinawa assured to them.

Q: What about other policies in connection with Japan during the Johnson years? I gather that Japan increasingly supported our Southeast Asian effort after about 1965 or '66. Were there any other major difficulties that arose that Mr. Johnson got involved in personally with Japan?

RUSK: President Johnson was personally involved, primarily, only in the Okinawa issue. We had, of course, running difficulties with Japan on trade matters. We are very large trading partners with each other. Both countries have a system of private enterprise, a surging economy. Both of them have an almost insatiable kind of economy—nothing is ever enough. Regardless of what happens today, tomorrow has to be bigger and better. In that kind of a trading situation there are bound to be irritants of all sorts—tariff barriers, non-tariff trade barriers, discriminatory taxes, discriminatory policies on investment, special taxes on American-scale, American-size automobiles. They were concerned about our attempts to limit their export of textiles to the United States and other Japanese imports to us which tended to disrupt our markets, because the Japanese were able to come into our markets with great vigor so we tried to handle those issues through the joint Cabinet Committee that we had with the Japanese. We talked about them frankly and in great detail and kept them more or less under control, but in general our relations with Japan were very good. We had, as I say, these normal problems of vigorous trading patterns, but on political questions we and the Japanese got along very well.

Q: That kept them below the Presidential level then?

RUSK: That's right.

Q: What about Indonesia? Mr. Johnson began with a problem there, I guess in regard to foreign aid. Did he have a position as to what our interests in Indonesia were that became important at any point?

RUSK: Sukarno's Indonesia was a very difficult country to get along with, and our relations with Indonesia continued to deteriorate so long as Sukarno was in office. That changed dramatically when Sukarno was forced out of office by the present group of generals, and there was a turn-around of Indonesian policy.

I think the most concern we had over Indonesia had to do with the confrontation with Malaya. They got into a situation where they were sending guerrillas not only into the offshore parts of Malaysia over in Borneo, but also in Malay proper, and we were concerned because Australia and New Zealand had security commitments to Malaysia and had forces there. Under the Anzus Treaty, if New Zealand or Australian forces were attacked in the treaty area, and Malaysia was in the treaty area, that could very likely bring up the obligation of Anzus and involve the United States and our commitment to Australia and New Zealand. We tried to point that out to Sukarno in an effort to cause him to pause. Fortunately with the change in government in Indonesia, the confrontation came to a close; and that was a major step forward in the general political security situation in Southeast Asia.

I'm not one of those who claims that what we were doing in South Vietnam made it possible for Indonesia to turn its policy around. There are some Indonesians who have commented that the very fact that the United States was present in Vietnam and that the Seventh Fleet was there between Indonesia and mainland China gave them courage to move strongly against the Chinese Communists who were heavily involved in Indonesia and were participants in that attempted coup d'etat which led to the turnover in government, but I think it would be unfortunate for the United States to claim that what we

were doing in Vietnam was the thing which produced the change in attitude in Indonesia. I think those changes came about for Indonesian reasons and not directly because of what we were doing in Vietnam.

Q: I was smiling a minute ago not at your answer, but at the fact that you seemed to read my mind on these questions. I was just about to open my mouth to ask the question that you began to answer. Maybe we've been at this long enough that I can just turn the machine on and let you go on.

What about Korea? I gather that this is one of the instances where there was a real personal rapport between President Johnson and President Park that contributed a great deal to the success of our relations in Korea. Is that accurate?

RUSK: Yes. President Johnson had a great respect for President Park and for good reason. President Park, under great difficulties, had brought Korea along in remarkable progress, economically and socially and politically. He was tough in defense of the interests of South Korea hut was reasonable and balanced and was not provocative or militant in his general attitude toward North Korea. He took a responsible attitude toward such questions as Southeast Asia. He seemed to be willing to play a role that reflected Korea's gratitude for the assistance it had had from the United States back in 1950. His willingness to put two divisions of South Korean troops into Southeast Asia was welcomed by President Johnson. South Korea had no treaty obligation to do so. It was not a member of SEATO, and when he made it clear that he was prepared to take part in that struggle down there, this of course touched President Johnson very deeply. And the Koreans turned out to be very good fighters in South Vietnam, as they turned out to be by the end of the Korean war in their own country. But there was a personal rapport between President Johnson and President Park.

Q: When did the renewed tensions along the armistice line in Korea become serious again?

RUSK: I think that we began to be freshly concerned in 1967 when the rate of infiltration seemed to increase significantly. And when the North Korean leaders began making militant speeches about unifying the country by 1970 and making very bellicose statements about their own policy and attitude, we became very much concerned because we had fifty thousand American troops in Korea.

We had a very flat and direct security treaty with Korea. A renewal of the Korean war would be something that we would look upon with the greatest dismay because we had enough of a struggle going on in Southeast Asia. We didn't want a second struggle up in Korea. It was rather courageous on the part of President Park to put two divisions of his own troops into South Vietnam at a time when he was having infiltration problems with the North Koreans, and when the North Koreans were talking in a very belligerent mood, but he went ahead and did it. But throughout '67 and '68 we were very much concerned about North Korea.

Q: Was the Pueblo incident a calculated part of this, do you think, or was that just an aberration that was unrelated to their troubles with South Korea?

RUSK: I will never fully understand just why the North Koreans seized the Pueblo. It's one of those situations where a small belligerent country can act with a lack of responsibility simply because other countries don't want war. The Pueblo was in international waters. It was there to do some listening on communications in North Korea. We had an interest in picking up as much intelligence as could out of North Korea because of the belligerency of North Korea towards South Korea and the increase of infiltration into South Korea, but we were relying upon the high seas, the freedom of the seas—

Q: There was never a doubt about its location?

RUSK: Oh, no, never a doubt about its location. As a matter of fact, in the communications which the North Koreans themselves flashed back from the scene, they even put the

position further out on the high seas than we did so they knew they were on the high seas. And when I say high seas, I mean beyond their own twelve-mile limit.

Q: Yes, their definition of high seas.

RUSK: And not just beyond our three-mile limit. But that was a very unhappy episode from beginning to end.

Q: That's Presidential from the beginning, I expect. What was Mr. Johnson's reaction to that?

RUSK: He was, of course, furious with the North Koreans, and like me [he] failed to understand just why they went out of their way to be so disagreeable about it. Nevertheless President Johnson did not want a war with North Korea. He made a prompt decision to try to get the ship and its men back by diplomatic means rather than by military means. We were faced with the fact that if you tried to use military force to rescue the men you might pick up dead bodies, but you wouldn't pick up live men and that you might well start a war at a time when we didn't want a war between North and South Korea involving American forces.

So we decided to swallow hard and try to get these men back by diplomatic means, and that took a great deal of doing. We had meeting after meeting that made no progress; and we finally released the men by a device which I described at the time as being without precedent in international affairs. We signed a statement which the North Koreans insisted we sign, but at the very time we signed it we made a statement saying that we denounced the signature and the statement itself was false.

Q: They knew you were going to make this statement?

RUSK: They knew in advance that we were going to make that statement. This had been worked out in advance. It's as though a kidnapper kidnaps your child and asks for fifty

thousand dollars ransom. You give him a check for fifty thousand dollars and you tell him at the time that you've stopped payment on the check, and then he delivers your child to you. I think probably what happened was that the North Koreans came to the conclusion that they had milked the Pueblo affair for all that was in it, and that there was no particular point in holding on to these men any further.

Q: The Russians didn't play any constructive role—?

RUSK: I think it's possible that the Russians played a mediating role in that situation. We have no way of knowing. We asked the Russians on several occasions to use their influence with North Korea to free these men and the ship, but we never knew just what they did by way of follow-up on it.

Q: Did we have to act to restrain the South Koreans in that atmosphere [when] under renewed infiltration, the attack on the Blue House, and the seizure of the Pueblo all sort of came together?

RUSK: The South Koreans were interested in what might be called close-in retaliation, but I never got the impression that the South Koreans wanted to go into full-scale war. So to the extent that it was necessary to restrain them, it wasn't a very difficult job because they were not itching for war, either. They did get very incensed about the Blue House raid and about other types of infiltration that were coming across. There were times when they would carry out retaliation against North Korea by counter raids without our permission, and so we had a little job at times of cooling them down a bit and restraining them from these relations which they were inclined to pull off.

Q: Mr. Johnson talked frequently about the concept of regionalism in Asia. Was there any basis in Asia for the development of that regionalism, or was that something what we pretty well had to impose ourselves upon them?

RUSK: No, one of the very encouraging developments in Asia during this period of the South Vietnamese conflict was that the nations in Asia during this period of the South Vietnamese conflict was that the nations in Asia themselves began to draw together on their own initiative. Sometimes it would be on the initiative of the Japanese who would draw them together for an agricultural conference. Sometimes it would be on the initiative of the Koreans, sometimes the Thais, sometimes the Filipinos but they began to draw together in such organizations as ASPAC, in such organizations as ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), to try to work out closer methods of cooperation among them in a wide range of political, economic, social, scientific, technological fields. No, this is not something that we had to impose upon them. There was a good deal of interest in this among the Asians themselves, and we felt that it was wholesome for the Asians to try to get together without the direct participation of the United States so that they could feel that they were doing something on their own, and that Big Brother was not simply there monitoring everything they did.

Another thing that made a considerable difference in this matter was the new attitude of Australia. Australia and New Zealand had traditionally held themselves more of less aloof from Asian affairs. They looked upon themselves as a member of the Commonwealth but Australia began to accept its roles as a Far Eastern country-and to take an active part in these regional discussions among Asian countries. This was a very marked development in Australian policy and. was very wholesome in terms of encouraging the Asians to get together on a more realistic basis on their own affairs.

Now, bear in mind that New Zealand is a long way from Southeast Asia. I've been told that New Zealand is further away from Saigon than Saigon is from Paris. I think you'd have to take some measurement on that, but in any event they're not all that close in. They geographically have the capability of being more or less aloof, but they've decided not to be aloof, and they've taken an active part in the discussions among the free countries of Asia.

This goes back to an attitude of mine when I was Assistant Secretary under the Truman Administration. I at that time opposed the idea which later became SEATO. I felt that it was a mistake for the United States to take a direct part in a regional security arrangement in Southeast Asia in a way that would divide the Southeast Asian countries among themselves—where you'd have some countries participating and some not. It would be far better to let the Southeast Asian countries evolve their own regional security arrangement without the United States being a direct party, and then we could stand in powerful second line assistance, second line support to the region, if it ever got into trouble. But the events of 1954 caused the Eisenhower Administration to take another view particularly when North Vietnam was lost to the Communists and the prospect was that the rest of Southeast Asia would be exposed to penetration from the Communist North Vietnam.

Q: What about things like the Asian Development Bank where American participation was direct?

RUSK: There our participation was essential because of the need for American financial participation but Japan is present on about the same basis as is the United States. But I look upon the Asian membership of the Asian Development Bank as being one of those groupings where the Asian countries will be drawing closer together among themselves. The fact that there is a Japanese director of the bank and that the bank is located in Manila takes away from it a sort of “made in USA” stamp.

Q: But was it Mr. Johnson's special interests—the concept of regionalism, and particularly the Asian Development Bank—was that something he personally was very—?

RUSK: Yes. President Johnson wanted us to give all the encouragement we could to this growing regionalism in Asia, but to do it in a way which would not spoil it—to do it in a way which would allow maximum initiative to be taken by the Asian countries themselves because, you see, there you have one of those situations where you act quietly rather than

publicly in order to let other people take the responsibility and the credit for what they are able to accomplish. Otherwise, you can get in the way of your own purpose.

Q: Are there any other areas of Asia that Mr. Johnson's role becomes directly important that we haven't had occasion to mention? Asia is a big area obviously; I don't want to miss any that you think might be important.

RUSK: I think that President Johnson's own personal relation with the leaders of Asia was very good. On his trips out there he spent time talking with a number of them. I was with him on some of those trips. He tried to develop a personal relationship with Asian leaders that would be a basis itself for mutual confidence and understanding.

We did have some tension with India over India's food problem. We were in the position of being the residual supplier of food to India in the event of an Indian short-fall in food production. A drought came along about four years ago which gave India a real crisis in its food situation, add it appeared that they were going to have several million tons of foods from us if they were to meet their most minimum needs. That was a very expensive thing for us because, although we have flood surpluses, those surpluses represent dollars as far as the American taxpayer is concerned. President Johnson came to the conclusion, shared by Secretary of Agriculture [Orville] Freeman, that the Indians themselves were not doing all that they needed to do to take care of their own food problem. For example, they took a very negative attitude toward private investment in fertilizer. They were not able to move food stocks from one state to the other because the states would try to hoard food—

Q: The ones that had against those that didn't have.

RUSK: That's right and not share it with deficient states. There were problems in agricultural extension. There was not enough of what we call agricultural extension. In trying to teach Indian farmers how to grow more food with the resources that they were then already using and there were other questions which all amounted to a lack of priority on the part of the Indian government to its own agricultural development. So President

Johnson became very resistant to the idea that we would simply stand by and make up the difference in whatever India needed, regardless of what India did about it, and so he insisted on a change in Indian priorities in the direction of more emphasis on their agricultural sector. He had Secretary Freeman, who worked with the Minister of Agriculture in India, to work out a broad program of increased priorities, and that went to the Cabinet and was approved by the Indian Cabinet, and that has paid substantial dividends in the period since.

Q: That was President Johnson's personal—

RUSK: That was President Johnson's personal intervention of the Indian food problem that brought that about. Now, this was one of those situations where President Johnson was tough, but he was tough for basically humanitarian reasons because he fully understood that we simply did not have the capability of meeting India's short-fall of food unless India did everything that it possibly could to take care of its own food production. So that in the interest of feeding Indians, President Johnson took a very tough line with the Indian government and said to them, “Now look here. If you expect the United States to do thus-and-so, there are a lot of things you've got to do on your own behalf which you're not doing in order to feed your own people.” I remember one time President Johnson made the remark that the President of the United States cannot be more interested in feeding Indians than the Prime Minister of India, and what he was interested in was demonstrating that the Prime Minister of India was prepared to take the steps necessary to feed the Indian people.

Q: The quid pro quo we were demanding was not support for one of our policies so much as something that they could do for their own internal—

RUSK: No, no. We weren't asking any political quid pro quo in terms of Vietnam, or a vote on Red China in the United Nations, or anything of that sort. The only quid pro quo we

were asking for was things that the Indians ought to be doing for themselves, quite apart from the United States.

Q: Was it related in any way to the India-Pakistan difficulty that occurred earlier, or was that an entirely separate episode that ought to be commented on?

RUSK: That was rather separate, but we took the view during the Indian-Pakistan fighting that since we had strongly urged the two sides to take steps that would avoid the conflict, that if they wanted to ignore our advice and go to war with each other that we wouldn't pay for it. The conflict between India and Pakistan has been a big burden to the United States.

That subcontinent has been the principal recipient of American aid. The hostility between India and Pakistan has brought about a diversion of their own resources to their military establishments, and has caused them to refrain from trade with each other and the cooperative action that would make life better on the subcontinent as a whole. So when the Pakistanis first put several thousand guerrillas into Kashmir, the Indians moved troops into southern Kashmir and into Pakistan opposite Kashmir. Then the Pakistanis moved troops into India further south, and then the Indians responded by moving still more forces into Pakistan. In other words they allowed the matter to escalate very fast, on both sides contrary to the advice that was being given them by the United States so we in effect shrugged our shoulders and said, “Well, if you're going to fight, go ahead and fight, but we're not going to pay for it.” So we suspended our aid to both countries during that period and tried to express our disapproval of the struggle.

Q: Were the events that led up to the Tashkent settlement mainly Russian initiatives, or were we participating quietly in those as well?

RUSK: We encouraged the Russians to go ahead with the Tashkent idea, because we felt we had nothing to lose. If they succeeded in bringing about any d#tente at Tashkent, then there would be more peace on the subcontinent between India and Pakistan, and we would gain from that fact. If the Russians failed at Tashkent, at least the Russians would

have the experience of some of the frustration that we had had for twenty years in trying to sort out things between India and Pakistan. As a matter of fact I once, in a semi-joking way, told the Russian Ambassador that if he wanted them we would be glad to give him all of our old memoranda on efforts that we had made over the past twenty years to try to solve things between India and Pakistan as a part of their preparation for Tashkent, but that did not become necessary.

Q: Would you like to switch over a world away to Latin America, or do you think there are other things about Asia that might be better put right here? I thought we could get started here on the Latin American side and then change chat [tape].

A good beginning might be one of your own comments that I picked up out of the earlier transcript. I believe in the first session you mentioned that in summarizing the kind of President Mr. Johnson seemed to you, that he, for example, provided action for the Alliance for Progress programs. On the other hand, the critics have sometimes said that the Alliance died in the Johnson Administration. I wonder if you can comment on the divergence of views there.

RUSK: It's always easy to criticize a program which is not perfect. The Alliance for Progress was an effort to mobilize the resources in the first instance of Latin America for development. The American aid was never to be more than about two percent of the gross national product of Latin America. Now, you don't buy countries for two percent.

We expected the Latin Americans to take far-reaching steps in their own behalf in terms of investment, tax programs, the elimination of corruption, improvement in the agricultural sector, improvement in education, improvement in public health across the broad iron of development. We wanted them to move fast, but on the other hand we wanted them to move by democratic processes as much as possible.

When you think about our own experience in this country—say during the New Deal of Franklin Roosevelt—you recognize that major steps of an economic and social character

are highly controversial. We had a lot of trouble during the New Deal days in getting legislation through and moving to adopt the reforms that President Roosevelt was trying to put into effect.

Now, these Latin American countries also have their internal politics. They have vested interests. They have inertia. They have resistance to social change so that changes did not occur as fast as we hoped they might. Nevertheless the total effect of the Alliance for Progress was very constructive. I won't try to go into the figures—I don't have the figures at my tongue tip here this morning—but I think that if you look at what was accomplished during the period of Alliance for Progress in investment, in new tax systems, in education, in public health, in increased agricultural productivity, you can see that it was a period of substantial progress in Latin America.

I think that one of the things that happened was that when a new Administration came in, they felt under some pressure to do things differently. It's almost inevitable that a new Administration will want to appear different than its predecessor. Just as President Kennedy invented the phrase, “Alliance for Progress,” to show difference with the Eisenhower Administration, so the new Nixon Administration wanted to appear to be doing something different. In fact, the Alliance for Progress originated during the Eisenhower Administration. It was some of Milton Eisenhower's work that gave birth to the ideas which later became the Alliance for Progress.

Another thing which affects what you call things is the fact that foreign aid runs through cycles of interest as far as the Congress is concerned. We've had several fresh starts in foreign aid. Partly because foreign aid is a burden, people would be glad to do without it if possible. It gets to be boring from the point of view of the Congress, and it even gets to be boring from the point of view of the administrator. I myself appeared before Congressional committees thirty-two times in public testimony on behalf of foreign aid—four times each year.

Q: They'll only authorize one year.

RUSK: You have to appear twice at the authorization stage and twice at the appropriation stage each year, and you're supposed to make a different speech about foreign aid on each occasion. Well, when you make thirty-two speeches on foreign aid, it gets a little difficult to pretend that everything is fresh and new each year. To some extent there was a feeling that the Alliance for Progress had run out of gas as a concept as far as the Congress was concerned, and that some kind of fresh start was indicated. I haven't yet seen clearly the main lines of the new Administration's approach to Latin America. The results of the Rockefeller report and the recommendations that President Nixon has made are not yet all that apparent. But something like the Alliance for Progress—whatever it's called—is going to be necessary because the United States cannot possibly ignore the needs of this hemisphere for economic and social development. But again we are very much the junior partner. Although foreign aid appropriations look large from our point of view, they're very small in relation to the gross national product of the country receiving aid, and they're only a small part of the total effort made by the countries themselves for their own development. But President Johnson put a lot of personal effort into the Alliance for Progress.

Q: Did he do so as Vice President at all? Did he play any part in the Kennedy Administration's development of Latin American policy?

RUSK: Very little during that period. He kept well informed on it, but he did not, so far as I can recall, play a major role in the actual decisions that were made. But he gave the Alliance for Progress his top priority as soon as he became President. I think I said earlier that during the first week of his Presidency he called in the Latin American Ambassadors and dedicated himself to the Alliance for Progress. He began to put the spurs to the rest of us to get going on action in support of the Alliance for Progress and to get away from

the theorizing and the words and the concepts and. the eloquence and to get around to actually doing things which would produce results in the countries of the hemisphere.

President Johnson always looked upon the hemisphere as, in a certain sense his priority area, despite the war in Vietnam and despite our obvious major involvements in Europe. He used to say that “This hemisphere is our home. This is where we live. These are our neighbors. If we can't get along with our neighbors, with whom can we get along?” This marked his approach to Latin America. He gave the Latin Americans time, attention, affection, interest, and, to the extent that Congress would let him, he gave them resources.

Q: I suppose the climax of that effort, as far as the Alliance is concerned, is his meeting with the Chiefs of State in 1967 at Punta del Este. You accompanied him on that trip, did you not?

RUSK: Yes.

Q: And he met privately with all the Chiefs of State of the nations in attendance there?

RUSK: Yes. Apart from the meetings that were held around the table of the group, he met individually with every Chief of State who was present, and I looked upon that as a very remarkable exercise of personal diplomacy on his part. He was well briefed on the Problems of each country before he met the Chief of State. He had very good heart-to-heart talks with them about their problems, about what we could or could not do about them. He also helped to consolidate the group action that was taken in support of the Alliance for Progress and in support of Latin American economic integration in these private talks. I'm one who has always been skeptical about what can be accomplished at the summit. In general my view has been that summit meetings usually don't produce as much result as is usually hoped for, but I must say that summitry carried out by the President at the Punta del Este meeting of Chiefs of State was a very definite plus as far as American relations with Latin America are concerned.

Q: Did it require fairly tough talking on Mr. Johnson's part with such Presidents as Arosemena of Ecuador who was recalcitrant?

RUSK: Oh, there were some misunderstandings, some disagreement, but President Johnson was very straightforward and direct and forthright, but yet friendly in talking over disagreements with his Latin colleagues. He, on the whole, found them receptive and cooperative and understanding of the North American position, but he didn't pull any punches when he would talk to them about differences that might exist. You mentioned Ecuador. I believe Ecuador did not sign the final act, as I recall, but President Johnson didn't give anything away to fellows like that, and kept his balance and handled the situation very well.

Q: Had he pretty well cleared with Congressional leaders before going how far he could go in offering continued American aid? I think he announced there an increase of a certain amount in our subsequent support for the Alliance.

RUSK: We consulted with the Congressional leaders, and indeed got a very good resolution from the House of Representatives before he went to the Fanta del Este meeting. We wanted to get a similar resolution from the Senate, but the Senate bowed its back and wouldn't give us a resolution of a sort that would be helpful. Senator Fulbright, among others, took the view that it was not necessary to consult the Congress, that in general the Congress has usually supported Presidents who go off and make commitments for the United States, and that Congress shouldn't be asked to buy a pig in a pole. So there was one of those situations where the Administration was trying to consult the Congress, and the Senate was being resistant about being consulted. This contrasts rather sharply with the general criticism you hear that the Senate and the Congress wanted to be consulted on matters before any steps are taken. But the House of Representatives passed a very forthcoming resolution which encouraged the President to

go ahead at Punta del Este and give the encouragement to the Chiefs of State down there that he did about continued support for the Alliance for Progress.

Q: I don't know of any job in your State Department that changed more frequently than the Assistant Secretaryship of Inter-American Affairs. Is that related to policy, or is it just such a man-killing job that nobody can stand it for a very long time?

RUSK: Well, it actually came about through a series of accidents of personnel. For example, we had Tom Mann as Assistant Secretary for Latin America for awhile, but then we wanted him to be Under Secretary. Lincoln Gordon went off to be President of Johns Hopkins. There were no changes in Assistant Secretary for Latin America based upon policy differences or desire to change policy. As a matter of fact, we regretted very much that there was such a rapid turnover on that job, but it was just impossible to maintain one man on it very long because something would happen.

Q: This tape is about to run off. Let's let it do so before we start another question.

(Interview continues, March 8, 1970)

Q: This is March 8, 1970—a continuation with Secretary of State Dean Rusk.

The subjects, as I said, sir, are the Middle East, Europe, and Africa; and then perhaps some generalizations on such things as foreign aid, and so on. Taking the Middle East first, that's a crisis that arises in a very short time frame. I've heard people say that the government, under any Administration perhaps, can't really deal effectively with two crises at the same time like the Middle East and Vietnam. Was that a distinct distraction from government action?

RUSK: That's just not true. Vietnam was never such a problem as to cause us to neglect other areas. There were times when for weeks on end President Johnson would give more time to Europe or to the Middle East or to Latin America than he did to Vietnam. I

once met with a group of European correspondents who complained that Vietnam was diverting us from interest in Europe; and I asked them to name one subject of interest to the Europeans in which we were not taking a full part. And they looked at each other and couldn't find a single subject. So it was just not true that Vietnam was such a total preoccupation that we neglected other areas.

Q: Is that also true of the President? Was he able to master the details of a problem like the Middle East?

RUSK: Oh, yes. He worked intensely on the Middle East. The general background of Middle Eastern policy is a declaration made by several Presidents that the United States supports the territorial integrity and political independence of all the states of the Middle East. Now at one time or another the United States has acted in support of that policy, in support of Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, as well as Israel. The general attitude of the United States is that the Middle East ought to be stabilized on the basis of the existing states in the area, and that the United States ought to try to make friends with all of those states.

You had a three-cornered rivalry in the Middle East. You had on the one hand a contest between the so-called progressive Arab States—the extreme Arab States—and the moderate and conservative Arab states such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia; the more progressive or more extreme Arab states being primarily Egypt, Syria, and Algeria.

So we were interested in peace in the Middle East. In 1967 we became disturbed because we found that the Soviets were circulating rumors of Israeli mobilization against Syria, which did not check out as being factually true when we looked at the situation on the ground. But those rumors excited the grabs and probably had something to do with the formation of the alliance between Syria and Egypt, and later Jordan and Egypt. The

Soviets played a considerable role in stirring up the sense of hostility and crisis in the Middle East just prior to the June war.

Then when President Nasser closed the Strait of Tiran and insisted on the departure of the U.N. forces, I think the Soviets became concerned that the situation was moving too far and too fast. So they then tried to work with the United States to cool off the situation. We and they were in touch with each other, and we tried to get commitments from both sides that hostilities would not begin. They got such commitments from the Egyptians, for example; we got such a commitment from the Israelis. And when the Israelis then launched their attack in June 1967, it was in the face of a commitment to us that they would not do so, so we were very disappointed. The views in the Israeli cabinet were closely divided—there was almost a tie vote on most of these issues. But the so-called hawks in the Israeli Cabinet carried the day and precipitated the hostilities there, which caused the crisis of '67.

Q: When something like that breaks out suddenly, does it immediately get kicked over to the White House and become Presidential as opposed to the Department's handling it?

RUSK: Well, on a continuous basis we had furnished information to the President on the development of the crisis in the Middle East, so that he was in no sense caught by surprise. And then he was involved in some of the negotiations prior to the outbreak of hostilities. For example, he had a long talk with Abba Eban, the Foreign Minister of Israel. And it had been arranged that the Vice President of Egypt was coming to Washington on the Wednesday after the war actually broke out for the purpose of talking over the Strait of Tiran situation, and the President was going to take part in those conversations himself. So the President took a very active part in the consideration of the Middle Eastern crisis, both before it broke out and of course when the fighting actually started.

Q: How far did the plans actually get for some kind of joint action to open up the Straits of Tiran, either by American action or by joint international action?

RUSK: We looked upon it as involving two stages: One, a declaration by the Maritime powers— by a considerable number of Maritime powers, maybe a dozen—that the Strait of Tiran was an international waterway, and that innocent passage through the Strait of Tiran was available for all nations, and for ships carrying all flags. The second stage was the possibility of forcing ships through the Strait of Tiran even against Egyptian opposition. Now there, there were very few volunteers. Our own Senate and members of Congress were very anxious that we not do anything unilaterally in that situation; that whatever we did would be done as a group, preferably through the United Nations; to make it clear that we were not just pursuing a unilateral policy out there. When you looked around to find out who else would be with you in forcing the Strait of Tiran, volunteers were very few —possibly Britain, possibly the Netherlands, but beyond that there were very few good prospects. It would have been a difficult military operation anyhow, because it was in a relatively remote part of the world; it would mean that the vessels that would be engaged would have to be supported around the Cape because the Suez Canal of course was not available; it would mean that the vessels that were going through there would be subject to Egyptian air power, and that was a very tricky situation. The Israelis are good diplomats, and they knew as well as we did that the number of volunteers to send ships through the Strait of Tiran would be very few; and this undoubtedly had some influence on their decision to start hostilities.

Q: Is that actually what happened? We didn't ever have to decide either to do so or not to do so because hostilities came along?

RUSK: That's right. The plan was overtaken by events. When the Israelis made their decision to launch hostilities, then everything started over again.

Q: But we had gone so far as to seek some international volunteers? You mentioned England and the Netherlands had agreed?

RUSK: That's right. We were talking about that with other governments.

Q: When hostilities did break out, the earliest press sensation was the Department spokesman's, "neutral in thought, word, and deed" statement that Mr. Johnson apparently reacted strongly against. Was that accurate—he did react strongly against that slip?

RUSK: Yes, he did. That was an inadvertence on the part of the press spokesman who simply picked up a phrase that had been used in a staff conversation—the phrase came from Woodrow Wilson. And he used it publicly without really giving it enough thought. I tried myself to correct that phrase during the course of the day by a rephrasing of our attitude. But actually it was not as bad a statement as that—it just excited some of the Jews in our own country.

Q: How much of a problem is that? Domestic politics apparently are a greater importance in diplomacy in that area than almost anywhere in the world. Do you really have to keep a large eye on the domestic Jewish community, particularly since they're Democrats, when the Middle East is involved?

RUSK: I think that tends to be true of the Democratic Party than the Republican Party. The Democratic Party has strong ties with the Jewish community in this country, and traditionally the Democratic Party has been a lot more vigorous in support of Israel than the Republican Party. Anyhow, that was an increment in foreign policy which had to be taken into account.

Q: And you had some high ranking officials dealing with the problem who were Jewish themselves. Was that any problem?

RUSK: Yes, but they weren't so biased that they weren't able to pursue the President's policy with integrity.

Q: Had a decision been made upon a contingency plan if the Israelis had lost?

RUSK: No. We did not anticipate that the Israelis would lose such a battle. Our own military estimate was that the Israelis would succeed in defeating their immediate Arab neighbors in the course of about ten days. Well, we were just two or three days off.

Q: We were pessimistic; we thought it would take four more days than it did.

RUSK: That's right.

Q: What about the Russians after the hostilities started? You said they had decided that maybe they'd gone too far. Is that the circumstance that led to the Glassboro meeting, was that primarily a Middle Eastern summit affair?

RUSK: Well, the Middle East was the occasion for Mr. Kosygin's coming to the United States for a special meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations, so that the answer is yes in the sense that the Middle East was the reason for his being here. And of course if Mr. Kosygin and President Johnson got together while he was here, it was inevitable that the Middle East would play a large part in the talks.

Q: Were the Russians helpful then at that stage, or were they still meddlesome in the sense of stirring things up?

RUSK: Mr. Kosygin came to the general assembly of the United Nations dedicated to the point that Israel would first have to withdraw from all Arab territories, and then other elements in the peace conference would have to be discussed. We felt that it was impossible to get Israel to withdraw before the shape of a peace element was apparent, and it was necessary to talk about such things as passage through the Strait of Tiran and passage through the Suez Canal and guaranteed borders and the settlement of the refugees and things of that sort so that you'd have a complete package within which the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Arab territories would be one of the items. Mr. Kosygin

stuck with his attitude in his talks with President Johnson, and it was not until some time later that they began to talk about the various elements in the peace package.

Q: After Glassboro?

RUSK: After Glassboro.

Q: Actually we never have talked about Glassboro. If the Middle East was inevitable, I suppose Vietnam was too. Did the Russians come forward with a Vietnam proposal at Glassboro as well as on the Middle East?

RUSK: President Johnson and Mr. Kosygin talked about Vietnam at some length at Glassboro; and President Johnson gave Chairman Kosygin a formulation of bombing policy and talks which he thought Mr. Kosygin might transmit to Hanoi to see if Hanoi would find it acceptable. Mr. Kosygin accepted this formulation from President Johnson, and presumably transmitted it to Hanoi, but we never heard anything from it. So presumably Hanoi turned it down.

Q: Did he indicate that he could deal for the North Vietnamese at that point?

RUSK: He more or less indicated that he would transmit it to Hanoi to see what they thought about it.

Q: But that was the end of it as far as any developments were concerned.

RUSK: That's right. I think some more detail on this can be found in President Johnson's book.

Q: On this particular subject—Vietnam at Glassboro?

RUSK: Right.

Q: What about the "hot line" communiques? There is apparently disagreement as to how threatening the Russians were in their hot line messages. Did you think that they were particularly threatening during the course of the hostilities, or not so threatening?

RUSK: They were not particularly threatening as far as themselves taking action is concerned. They were very outraged and very sober about the fact that hostilities had broken out because we had told the Russians that we had assurances from the Israelis that they would not initiate hostilities, and so one of our problems was to assure the Russians that the Israeli attack surprised us as much as it did the Russians. And I think the Russians came to believe us on that point. But the Soviets must have known that in the event of fighting that the Arab side would suffer a stinging defeat. They have good professional military men who must have made some estimates themselves, and I'd be surprised if the Russian professional military estimate was much different than our own.

We tried to arrange a cease-fire on the first day. Had we been able to do so, there would not have been any fighting between Israel and Jordan and Israel and Syria. And Israeli forces would only have been maybe thirty miles or so into the Sinai Desert as far as Egypt was concerned. Had we been able to get a cease-fire on that first day, the situation would have been much more easy to solve than it is today! But the Russians and the Arabs delayed in the Security Council in moves toward a cease-fire; they tried to link it with withdrawal of forces, and they tried to inject other elements into the situation.

Q: We were trying this at the United Nations?

RUSK: That's right. It was not until about a week had passed that an actual cease-fire resolution succeeded in passing the Security Council. By that time the Israelis were already well established in Jordan-Syria, as well as Egypt.

Q: Had the United Nations consulted the United States, or had the Secretary General consulted the United States before he withdrew the U.N. forces in the area—?

RUSK: No, there was no consultation. We were very upset by the action taken by the Secretary General to withdraw U.N. forces from that part of the world on Nasser's request. In a purely technical sense of international law, it is perhaps true that U.N. forces cannot stay anywhere where the government itself does not wish them to stay. But on the other hand those forces were put there by the action of the General Assembly and of the Security Council. We felt that the Secretary General ought not to have made that judgment himself, but ought to have referred the matter to the Security Council or the General Assembly for instructions, during which referral there would have been some time given to negotiate out a different solution than the one that was finally reached.

Q: And had the forces stayed, we think that perhaps the hostilities could have been avoided?

RUSK: For example, President Nasser did not ask for the forces to be removed from Sharm el Sheikh at the mouth of the Gulf of Tiran. It was U Thant who took the attitude that removal of some of the forces meant removal of all the forces. And so when the U.N. forces pulled away from the Sharm el Sheikh and Egyptian forces went there, Nasser felt it was impossible for him to allow Israeli shipping to go through the Gulf; and that precipitated the casus belli for Israel, namely the closing of the Gulf of Tiran.

Q: Once the situation had stabilized after the armistice, our Administration presumably did not look with too much favor on four-power talks regarding a settlement—is that accurate?

RUSK: We were for a long time reluctant to take this up as a four-power matter, because we felt that it would be an uneven discussion; that the United States would be cast in the role of the lawyer for Israel—

Q: In the four-power—

RUSK: In the four-power talks. And the Soviet Union might well be cast in the role of the lawyer for Cairo; and that this was not the best way to get a solution. We much preferred

the use of Ambassador [Gunnar] Jarring from Sweden to try to make contact with the two sides and try to find out on the basis of Private exploration what basis for peace might exist. Now later four-power talks did develop.

Q: Later in the Johnson Administration?

RUSK: No, just in—

Q: Just after the other one began.

RUSK: But had the Johnson Administration have continued, we would have gone into four-power talks. Because we drew a distinction between four-power talks inside the frame work of the Security Council and four-power talks outside the Security Council. We took the view that it would be all right for the four permanent members of the United Nations to talk about these matters, looking toward Security Council action, but not to convene a big conference outside the framework of the U.N. for the purpose of dealing with the Middle East.

Q: Some of the statements by the current Administration seem to me at least to give the implication that the Johnson Administration's policy was dangerously pro-Israeli in the sense that it perhaps drove the Arab States more closely to Russia or some non-Western alliance. Do you think that's an unfair charge against the Johnson Administration?

RUSK: Well, the Johnson Administration was friendly to Israel, and President Johnson had made a decision to supply some additional planes to Israel, for example, when the French decided not to supply their Mirages. And of course the extreme Arab groups—Egypt, Syria, Algeria—did their best to link the United States directly with Israel when Israel launched its attack. And they tried to hold us responsible for Israel's action. You see, some of these capitals credit us with unlimited influences in Israel.

Q: And everywhere else.

RUSK: We don't have it. We just don't have it. And we're not the supervisors—the tutors—of Israel. They're a very independent little nation. But some of the Arabs tried to hold us directly responsible for whatever it was that Israel did.

Q: Were there any other elements of the Middle Eastern problem there in the summer of '67 that are important to go into or are there any vignettes of the President during that time that occur to you?

RUSK: Well, I think the historian will want to look at the five points which President Johnson announced as a basis for our policy toward the Middle East. Those five points were pretty well inscribed in the Security Council Resolution of November 1967. And we looked upon that November resolution as providing the basis for peace in the Middle East by giving each side assurances on those things which are most important to it. It basically meant that the Arabs would have to acknowledge that Israel was there to stay; that Israel was not to be driven into the sea; that it was a member of the international community of nations, and had a right to all the privileges and rights and obligations of any member of the international Community; that it was not to be discriminated against in the middle East as it had been up to that point; and that Israel would basically have to withdraw from most of the territories that it had occupied in the June fighting.

Q: What was the reaction of the Israelis, or the Israeli supporters in the United States, to that statement of policy? Did they think that was going too far to be even-handed?

RUSK: No, I think not. There were some groups here who thought that we were being too even-handed, but in general it was acceptable as a basis. Israel has never been enthusiastic about that November 1967 resolution. But we did not run into undue trouble in our own Jewish community here on the subject.

Q: And we didn't consult Israel about it—it was our own unilateral—is that right—unilateral statement of American policy?

RUSK: That's right.

Q: If nothing else occurs to you on the Middle East, let's shift north, I suppose, to the European sphere; and there one of the problems is that there are so many topics that we can't go into any of them perhaps with the depth that some of them might deserve.

The first one that got a lot of public comment after Mr. Johnson assumed the President was the multilateral force notion. Did Mr. Johnson ever have, to your knowledge, a strong view regarding the utility of that idea or that concept?

RUSK: I don't think that as Vice President he took much part in the discussions of the multilateral force. The multilateral force idea developed out of a request by the Europeans themselves to play a greater part in nuclear strategy and nuclear affairs. In the summer of 1960 Mr. [Paul-Henri] Spaak, who was then Secretary General of NATO, and General [Lauris] Norstad, who was then the NATO commander, came to our representatives at the NATO Council and told them that the Europeans wanted more of a role to play.

Q: Was that primarily the West Germans now, or—?

RUSK: Well, it was not just the West Germans; it was a group of them. And that something would have to be done to cut our allies in more effectively on nuclear matters; that they did not want any longer to leave it just as an American monopoly within NATO. Well, that caused Secretary [Christian] Herter in the December 1960 meeting of the NATO foreign ministers to propose an international force. At that time I think he had in mind some Polaris submarines as a part of that international force.

Well, when President Kennedy came to power, he took a look at this situation. And we decided then that it would be up to the Europeans to tell us what from the European point of view would meet their needs. And so we tried to pass the word to the Europeans that they should come up with some proposals. We waited for at least a year, maybe more than a year, to hear from our Europeans as to what would meet their needs since

they were the askers, they were the petitioners. But nothing came out of it. Finally the Europeans in effect said to us that they did not know enough about nuclear matters to be able to make proposals, and since we did that we should make some proposals of our own to try to meet their needs. So we got down to the drawing board and came up with the multilateral force idea. It was originally intended to be a submarine force, but through the opposition of Admiral [Hyman G.] Rickover and some members of the Congress and some members of the military, it was shifted from a submarine force to a surface vessel force because it was felt that on security grounds it would be unwise to cut all of our allies into the submarine technology that was involved.

So we proposed the multilateral force as a “for instance”—as one example of what might be done to create a NATO nuclear force. We were not putting it forward as a solution made in Washington which had to be accepted come what may; it was a tentative proposal. Well, the truth of the matter is that the Europeans were unable to agree among themselves as to what ought to be done with a NATO nuclear force; the British took one view, the Germans another, the French another, the Italians still another. The Germans and the British were never able to get together on their reaction to the multilateral force idea. And so since it was obvious that the multilateral force idea would not be unanimously accepted by the alliance, then we just let it die on the vine. Because the purpose of the multilateral force was to achieve an allied objective. As if this did not meet the allied point of view, then there was no point in going ahead with it. So by the time that President Johnson became President, it was clear that there was resistance to the multilateral force idea, both in the alliance and on Capitol Hill—Senators and Congressmen were opposed to it . And so it died a natural death from lack of sustenance.

Q: It didn't require any direct Presidential decision killing it at any point?

RUSK: No, it just required an understanding that we would not press the matter. We'd simply leave it on the table and let it die there.

Q: This is one of the issues that has been suggested where there was a clear division between at least some in the Department of State and the National Security operation in the White House. Was that accurate—the Department favoring it and the people in the White House opposing it clearly?

RUSK: I think there might have been some shadings of difference there among different individuals; there were some who felt themselves strongly committed to the multilateral force, who wanted to go ahead with it on the grounds that it would be good for the alliance. There were others who felt that if our allies do not want the multilateral force, it was not for the United States to press it. And so there were some differences of view within the Administration on the multilateral force idea.

Q: Those were the ones that the analysts called the "cabal" or the "Theologians" or something?

RUSK: That's right. The MLF developed a theology of its own.

Q: What happens to the people like that when they lose? Do they get farmed out then into —?

RUSK: No, they don't change their jobs. They just go ahead and take on the next problem that comes along and go working along. There are some of those who are still disappointed that the multilateral force idea never took hold.

Q: As you describe it then, the suggestion that I also have seen that the multilateral force was given up more or less as a kind of a quid pro quo for the Nonproliferation Treaty would not be an accurate analysis.

RUSK: The multilateral force had died before it got to the point of serious discussion in the Nonproliferation Treaty; but in fact the nonproliferation Treaty would rule out the multilateral force by its terms.

Q: The way we interpret its terms it would have denied us the opportunity to create that kind of force?

RUSK: Yes. We had long discussions with the Soviets on the key articles of the Nonproliferation Treaty. The chief objective of the Soviet Union was to be sure that the Germans never got their finger on any trigger under any circumstances, or by any combination of voting, or anything of that sort.

Now the way the Nonproliferation Treaty eventually wound up was on the basis of the idea that there would be no new entity that had control of nuclear weapons. If the countries of Western Europe were to merge, if they were to create a unified Europe which had control of foreign and military policy, then that Europe would be nuclear by direct succession—by inheritance from Britain and France. Now the Soviets had some objections even to that interpretation of the treaty, and we made it clear to them that we were going to announce that that was our interpretation of the treaty, and if they publicly objected to it then we'd have to go back to the drawing board and negotiate the treaty again; because there would be no treaty if that interpretation were counterbalanced. In fact they did not object to that interpretation; I suppose that the Soviets predict that it's going to be a long, long time before Europe ever gets to that degree of unity.

Q: Did those negotiations for that treaty require the President's direct participation at any point?

RUSK: Oh, yes. He followed the negotiations on the Nonproliferation Treaty very closely and had to make some of the key decisions about how far we would go, particularly on the point of negotiating a treaty which would rule out the MLF because he had to decide that we would ignore those allies who still wanted the MLF in negotiating the Nonproliferation Treaty.

Q: And the reaction from those allies was adverse to this decision so that he had to put up with their complaints pretty strongly?

RUSK: Well, they didn't complain very hard because they knew the MLF was dead; they had already learned that there was not going to be an agreement among the Europeans on the subject, therefore that we would not be able to go forward with it.

Q: The most sensational event I suppose in NATO affairs during the Johnson presidency was General de Gaulle's demand that the headquarters be moved out of France. What was Mr. Johnson's reaction to that?

RUSK: Well, we were disappointed of course that France withdrew from the military arrangements of NATO; it made a big difference in matters of convenience, matters of logistic support, matters of headquarters locations, and things of that sort. It affected the depth of the central front in Central Europe. But when President de Gaulle made that decision, President Johnson was determined that we meet it—that we do everything that President de Gaulle asked us to do by the time that he asked us to do it. And so President Johnson was determined that we as a matter of dignity get all of our forces out of France by the deadline set by President de Gaulle, and not be in the position of quarreling with him about that decision. President Johnson was determined not to be in the position of having a personal vendetta with President de Gaulle. He never let us criticize President de Gaulle personally, and his whole attitude was one more of regret than of anger that President de Gaulle had made that decision.

Q: Your implication there, stop me if I'm incorrect, is that there may have been some in the government who would have liked to pursue a stronger reaction policy toward de Gaulle, but—?

RUSK: Yes, there were some who wanted to attack President de Gaulle personally, and try to undermine him personally in France as well as in Europe. But President Johnson

wouldn't let us do that because he did not believe in personal vendettas among people who are carrying top political responsibility.

Q: After the move was accomplished then, NATO went through a number of exercises. One of the most important I suppose was the Harmel Exercise toward the end of the Administration. Did Mr. Johnson take any great interest in this or consider the NATO activity in that regard very important?

RUSK: He didn't take much interest in the Harmel exercise because it was not that sufficiently important. When we went to a NATO Foreign Ministers' meeting, we would always have a talk with President Johnson on the issues that were likely to come up and what lines of approach the President Wanted us to take toward the issues that were coming up at the Foreign Ministers' meeting. But the Harmel Exercise was a very useful exercise, but it went on at a level less than Chiefs of State.

Q: Was it one of our specific goals to try to enlarge NATO's responsibility to a world role, as one of the suggestions in that exercise ultimately came out?

RUSK: We were very anxious that Europe recover from its tendency to withdraw into itself and assume the role that was waiting for Europe in world affairs. You see, decolonization had been quite a shock to both France and Great Britain, and the tendency to become a little France or a little England was very pronounced. And there grew up in Europe a strong feeling of isolationism in the sense that Europe would look after its own affairs and not pay too much attention to wharfs going on in other parts of the world. We were concerned about this because that would leave the United States more or less alone as great power in the free world able to act in any part of the world where an action was required. We wanted some help in this role. And we thought particularly that Europe ought to take a very active part on the continent of Africa. Here was this vast continent within twenty minutes flying time of NATO Europe. And on geopolitical grounds we thought that Europe ought to be deeply concerned about anything that was going on on the continent of Africa. But

through my administration we were not able to get very much excitement on the part of Europe in what was going on in other parts of the world. And the same thing has been true under the Nixon Administration. Europe eventually will recover from its isolationism, but it will take some time and will probably take some further moves toward unification in Europe itself, so that a unified Europe can play the role of a great power in the world rather than being dependent upon the actions of individual national states.

Q: Is this the same issue that's involved in our continuing large troop commitment? I know some of Mr. Johnson's close friends in the Senate have been outspokenly in favor of reducing that commitment, and we did reduce it I guess once during your administration. Did Mr. Johnson have strong views on that subject?

RUSK: Well, President Johnson basically felt that we should not unravel NATO defenses by unilateral withdrawal of U.S. forces. But he was faced with some political facts of life in the United States, particularly in the Senate where a resolution to reduce forces would probably have passed. Such a resolution would probably not have passed the House of Representatives, but it would have created a very messy situation had the Senate passed a resolution to withdraw substantial forces from Western Europe. Our attitude on this was not made any easier by the attitude of the Europeans themselves, because the Europeans were not willing to do what was required in the defense, side to defend themselves. The proportion of their gross national product that went into defense budget was substantially lower than ours; they were not manning the ramparts of Central Europe with their own forces to the extent that we thought they should; so that we were in the position of being the only member of NATO who seemed to be meeting its NATO commitments. And that made it very difficult to carry the argument here in the United States against those who were trying to get some reductions, because they would argue that we ought to not be required to do more than the Europeans were prepared to do for themselves.

Q: Is that what made it necessary for us to put I suppose considerable pressure on the Federal Republic of Germany on their offset purchase program, for example?

RUSK: We have a substantial balance of payments problem arising from the presence of American forces in Europe. This is not a budgetary problem in the sense that it would cost us at least as much to maintain those same troops in the United States as it costs us to maintain them in Europe. So that as far as the budget is concerned there's not much in it one way or the other. But from the balance of payments point of view, this involved something like a billion-and-a-half dollars—

Q: Which is substantial.

RUSK: Yes. Which is substantial from a balance of payments point of view. And so we were anxious that the Germans particularly offset this balance of payments problem, in the first place by buying military equipment from the United States for their own armed forces; and then secondly by arrangements in the monetary and fiscal field to neutralize the balance of payments offset that the presence of our troops brought about. So we've always had difficulty negotiating with the Germans trying to get them fully to offset the balance of payments increment of our troops in Europe.

Q: Some of the European political analysts have always suggested that we pushed the [Ludwig] Erhard government so hard that we actually caused its political fall. Do you think that's an exaggeration, or is that accurate?

RUSK: Well, the Erhard government wanted to be relieved of any serious obligation on the balance of payments problem, and we just couldn't accept that. I think there's a little something in the fact that the failure of ourselves and Erhard to come together on the offset agreement has something to do with the fall of the Erhard government.

Q: And we undertook that pressure in the knowledge that that might be the result?

RUSK: Well, it was not a purpose of our position; we were simply in a situation where we had no alternative. We had to press for offsets, because we had problems of our own. We made a mistake back in the early 1950's when we first put our additional troops in Europe

in not making arrangements at that time to neutralize the balance of payments cost of such a move. But at that time we were trying to send dollars abroad—we were trying to close the dollar gap. We were going to all sorts of extremes such as the Marshall Plan, trying to put dollars in the hands of Europeans. So that at that time we did not look ahead to the time when we ourselves would have a shortage of dollars and would have to take care of the balance of payments situation. Had we put our troops into Europe initially on the basis of an arrangement which would neutralize foreign exchange costs, it would have been much better for us in the long run.

Q: Were Mr. Johnson's personal relations with Mr. [Kurt Georg] Kiesinger after he came to power there as close as they'd been with some of the previous German chancellors?

RUSK: I had the impression that Mr. Johnson never got as close to Chancellor Kiesinger as he had been with Chancellor Erhard.

Q: Erhard had visited here a number of times.

RUSK: Erhard had visited here, and they were close partners, and they were good friends; and although the relations between Johnson and Kiesinger were correct and cordial and friendly, I have the impression they were not as intimate as the relations with Erhard had been.

Q: All the experts say that the big problem in Europe of course is to settle the German problem. Did we push the Federal Republic to undertake measures of its own aimed toward settling the so-called German problem as it has apparently done in the past year?

RUSK: The settlement of the German problem is basically a problem with the Soviet Union. There isn't going to be any settlement of the German problem to which the Soviets don't agree. I talked with [Andrei A.] Gromyko many times about the German problem, and tried to show him what vast changes in the situation could take place if we got the German problem behind us. And the only thing that the Soviets had to do was to allow the East

Germans a chance to choose for themselves whether they wanted to be independent as a separate East German state, or become a part of the united Germany; and that if that question was settled by plebiscite, that then there would be far-reaching opportunities for a disarmament as between the two sides, and for intimate trade relations between the two sides, and a new era of peace in Central Europe.

You see, the German question is probably the only question on which the Soviet Union and the United States might be drawn into a nuclear war. We're not going to have a nuclear war with the Soviet Union about polar bears in the Arctic. The unsettled German question is the question on which there could be a major confrontation between our two sides. I would doubt, for example, there would be any nuclear confrontation over the Middle East. So that the German question is a question of the greatest importance.

We were in favor of what Willy Brandt called Ostpolitik; that is, a policy on the part of the Federal Republic to approve its own relations with the individual countries of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union. And we gave Chancellor Kiesinger and Willy Brandt more or less a free hand to explore the possibilities there. If the Federal Republic can work out its own relations with Eastern Europe on a more favorable basis, then that reduces the impact of the German question on U.S.-USSR relationships and it makes it much less of a dangerous problem.

Q: In your talks with Mr. Gromyko, did he ever indicate that the Russians were interested in moving in this direction seriously as well?

RUSK: No, I think that there was never an indication that the Russians were willing to contemplate a reunification of Germany on the terms that the West would accept.

Q: What about our policy under your and Mr. Johnson's Administration in the rest of Eastern Europe—the so-called building bridges policy? Was this a serious initiative on our part to try to really change the nature of things in that area of Europe?

RUSK: President Johnson took the view that it's too late in history to pursue an attitude of total hostility across the board toward anybody. He set about building bridges with Eastern Europe, not on the basis of trying to improve relations with all of them including the Soviet Union. You see, President Johnson did such things as bring the Consular Treaty negotiations to a conclusion, the Civil Air Agreement to a conclusion, the Nonproliferation Treaty, the space treaties; he did his best to get the SALT talks started before he left office. So that he was concentrating pretty hard on individual steps to improve relations with the countries of Eastern Europe, primarily with the Soviet Union. The Soviets were suspicious that the bridge building policy was an attempt to drive wedges between the smaller countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Well, that was not the purpose at all as far as President Johnson was concerned. It was to reduce tensions by trying to find points on which agreement could be reached, whether they were small points or large points, simply because President Johnson wanted to reduce the dangers in the world.

Q: Is this something that he himself was particularly interested in, or was he getting advice from the Department that convinced him that we should go in this direction?

RUSK: Both. But he personally felt very strongly about the need for finding points of agreement with the Soviet Union. Among other things for example, he proposed to the Congress an East-West trade bill which would have authorized the Executive to negotiate trade agreements with the countries of Eastern Europe on a most-favored-nation basis. But the politics of the situation in the Congress never let that bill come up for a vote.

Q: Was that just a casualty of Vietnam and the dissension growing out of that?

RUSK: Probably a casualty of Vietnam.

Q: That was one of his most famous speeches, I guess, that October 1966 speech that introduced that concept. Was that a program that the State Department developed for the purpose of building bridges?

RUSK: Yes, the State Department was very much in favor of the bridge building attitude. President Kennedy had also taken some of the same point of view despite the Berlin crisis of '61 and '62; despite the Cuban missile crisis. You'll remember President Kennedy did go ahead and complete the partial Test Ban Treaty.

Q: You mentioned awhile ago the SALT talks—that got interrupted by Czechoslovakia. How far had the agreement for a summit for example gone prior to the August invasion of Czechoslovakia?

RUSK: The Soviets moved into Czechoslovakia on a Tuesday night. It had been agreed between us and the Soviet Union that on the Wednesday morning—the next day—we were both going to announce in our respective capitals a summit meeting to launch the SALT talks. And one of the first things that we had to do when they moved into Czechoslovakia was to cancel that announcement. So we were just on the point of announcing a summit meeting to start the talks on offensive and defensive missiles. So we had gone a long way down that trail. Now one wonders why the Soviets felt that they could go ahead with the SALT talks and at the same time move into Czechoslovakia.

Q: They did think that, you—?

RUSK: Now from their point of view, of course it would have been fine—if we had been willing to go ahead. Because that would have put our blessing on what they were doing in Czechoslovakia and would mean that we would not take too much offense over it. But it was perfectly clear that from the point of view of our own people and our allies and the general world situation that we could not announce a summit meeting with the Soviets the morning after they had moved into Czechoslovakia.

Q: Did we ever get very close to reviving that idea then in the last months of the Administration?

RUSK: We tried to as late as December 1968. I have the impression that the Russians came to the conclusion there was no point in opening up the SALT talks with an Administration that was just about to leave office; that they should wait and engage the new Administration in such talks, although we had cleared the possibility of such talks with Mr. Nixon and had his blessing had the Soviets been willing to meet in December to get the talks started.

Q: At the time of the Czechoslovakian invasion, was there any lengthy debate as to what our reaction should be; did anybody want to do more than we were able to do?

RUSK: No. We had no commitments to Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia was a Communist country that was very active in pursuing the world revolution in terms of interfering in the affairs of other countries and doing things to stimulate dissident groups here and there. Czechoslovakia had been almost as active as Red China and the Soviet Union itself.

Q: They were the first ones to supply Egypt I suppose—

RUSK: So we did not feel that we owed any obligation to Czechoslovakia. Anyhow it was covered by the Warsaw Pact, and any overt move by us to support Czechoslovakia would have meant war, and we were not prepared to go to war over the issue of the internal arrangements in Czechoslovakia.

Q: Mr. Johnson made some statements that the press at least interpreted as being intended to protect perhaps other states in the area such as Romania and Yugoslavia; did we have a clear plan in mind that was the basis of those statements he made immediately after the invasion?

RUSK: We tried by warning the Soviet Union to inject some caution into their attitude toward the other countries. A move on the Soviet Union to Romania probably would not have brought forth any direct response from the United States given the location of

Romania and the general situation. But a move by the Soviets into Yugoslavia would have created a crisis of first-class proportions because the threat of the movement of Soviet armies to the Adriatic would have been of great concern to all of NATO as well as to the United States. So President Johnson tried to warn the Soviet Union against any further Czechoslovakias.

We had not issued a public warning about Czechoslovakia to the Soviets before it happened; we were playing it calmly and quietly, more or less with the blessing of the Czechs themselves. We had talked privately with the Soviet Union about Czechoslovakia and objected strenuously to the efforts which they seemed to be making to charge western imperialists with stirring up problems in Czechoslovakia. And I told the Soviet Ambassador that that looked to me like an attempt to build up an excuse for moving armed forces into Czechoslovakia, and that we didn't like that at all. The Soviet Ambassador told me that no such thing was in progress.

Q: Can you roughly date that—how far in advance of the actual troop movement did that happen?

RUSK: That was about three weeks. I think the Soviets did not decide to go into Czechoslovakia until about three days before they actually went in; they got their troops ready; they got all their maneuvers accomplished; and they got their logistics laid on; and they got everything else ready. But our later information was that they made their decision to go in on the Saturday before the Tuesday on which they actually did go in. So that it surprised a good many Russians, I suspect, as well as a good many Americans.

Q: You don't think there was any element in that decision of avoiding the SALT talks or avoiding the summit?

RUSK: No. I think these were on two different tracks in the Soviet policy-making machinery, and that the two just happened to come out that way.

Q: You mentioned earlier that the Vietnam problem had never caused us to not pay adequate attention to any European problems. A different part of that is the claim by the critics always that our policy and our relations in regard to Western Europe were greatly damaged by our activities in Vietnam. Do you think there's anything to that in any of the countries involved?

RUSK: Well, I think with the isolationist view in Western Europe that they just didn't want to see any problem like the Vietnam problem on their plate; they'd be glad to see Vietnam simply disappear from the agenda. Some of them did not understand that the integrity of the United States under a security treaty is of fundamental importance to Western Europe. Had we simply pulled out of Vietnam, President de Gaulle would have been the first one in Europe to say, “Ah, you see, you cannot rely upon the Americans under a security treaty.” Because he had tried to tell the Europeans that we could not be relied upon under NATO. But in general we didn't get much flak from the other members of NATO about Vietnam. There was some problem in the left wing of the Labor Party in Great Britain, and there were a few demonstrations here and there, but in general our NATO allies seemed to understand what our problem was in Vietnam.

Q: What about states such as Sweden who encouraged apparently some of our deserters or protesters and so on?

RUSK: Well, Sweden became very unneutral toward Vietnam. They favored North Vietnam; they did not act like a neutral at all in dealing with American deserters. For example if they gave political asylum to Americans, say American deserters, they were under an obligation to be sure that those Americans did not participate in political activities in Sweden under political asylum. So they created a new category for these Americans; they let them in on humanitarian grounds, which left them free to participate in political activities. And so we felt that that was, again, an unneutral act on the part of Sweden. So we had a rather bad time with Sweden there for a period of two or three years.

Q: Were they alone in that exception pretty well in Europe?

RUSK: In general, yes.

Q: None of the NATO allies participated in that kind of unneutral acts?

RUSK: No.

Q: One of the things that came up about the time you left office and was a matter of some publicity for awhile was the negotiation for the renewal of the Spanish bases; the press kept charging it was being handled by the military rather than the State Department. Can you clear up what went on in that situation and the reason for it?

RUSK: The Spanish base negotiation was a very difficult negotiation because Spain wanted to make the most of those bases. Spain for example either wanted to get into NATO, or to have a security treaty with the United States comparable to the NATO Treaty on the grounds that Spain was incurring risks by having American bases on board, and that there ought to be some compensation for that. In addition to that, Spain wanted extraordinarily high levels of military support, in terms of equipment, in exchange for the bases. Well, when the time came for renewal, I had a discussion with the Spanish Foreign Minister, and we agreed that the discussions should take place in three stages. There should be a preliminary political stage between the Foreign Minister and myself in which both sides would decide whether or not they wanted the base agreements to continue. There would then be a second stage which would be military in character which would get into the question of hardware—what kind of equipment should in fact be furnished Spain for what purposes, and for what strategic objectives, in connection with the base agreement. And that there would then be a third stage which would be, again, political in character which would wrap up the whole works.

Well, we had the first stage and the Foreign Minister and I did agree that we wanted the bases agreement to continue. Then when we got to the military stage the American

military negotiator let himself be drawn into very important political questions, such as security assurances to Spain, and went beyond his terms of reference. And that was what caused the problem. Because he got into questions which should have been reserved for the third political stage at the Foreign Minister level.

Q: Which was already scheduled.

RUSK: Which was already scheduled. So the flak resulted from the fact that in the military discussions they got into political questions which should have been reserved for the third stage.

Q: Was it our policy unalterably to oppose Spanish admission to NATO, or was it our allies who—

RUSK: No. We were in favor with Spanish admission to NATO and had been for some years. But countries like Britain with the Labor government, the Scandinavian countries, perhaps Belgium, just could not see admitting Franco to NATO. There was still too much memory there of the early relations with the Franco regime. And so since admission to NATO is on a basis of unanimity, the admission of Spain to NATO has never been a political possibility.

Q: There are, as you're quite aware, all sorts of peripheral European issues. Are there any important ones where the President got particularly interested, or played a decisive part, that occur to you?

RUSK: Well, the President made some very important decisions, which will be available in his book, on fiscal and monetary matters involved in Western Europe. The work of the Committee of Ten, and the work that [Secretary of Treasury Henry] Joe Fowler handled so successfully in working out the Special Drawing Rights in the International Monetary Fund. The President took an intimate part in the various discussions we had when there were monetary crises involved in the Pound, or the dollar, or the franc, and handled himself with

great astuteness. He seemed to grasp these questions fully and in great detail. Which very many people can't say. That's right. And I was very much impressed with his technical competence in dealing with fiscal problems involving the Western community. Then he also had to be personally involved in an intimate way in the conclusion of the Kennedy Round negotiations on trade. We had several long sessions with him in the closing stages of the Kennedy Round to see whether we would in fact accept the position that had been worked out by the negotiators in dealing with some sixty thousand or more separate items in those negotiations. And it was the President who made the decision to say yes, and to go ahead with the Kennedy Round negotiations even though he knew that there would be some disturbance here in this country on certain aspects of the Kennedy Round results.

Q: He took a generally liberal trade position, toward free trade, toward lower controls and so on?

RUSK: Yes. And he did not want us to be responsible for starting a new cycle of restrictive trade practices which would have led to worldwide depression. He wanted us to move forward on a more liberal open trading system on the grounds that that would be in the American interest as a great trading nation and would also be good for the western community as a whole.

Q: On the monetary affairs, again it was a case of the French and the Americans being at odds, was it not? Did this arouse a new round of anti-French sentiment on our part?

RUSK: It was President de Gaulle who seemed to put this in a bilateral France-U.S. context. As a matter of fact from the U.S. point of view, France was a minority of one in the Committee of Ten. France wasn't playing in the general community effort to find answers to these monetary problems. And so President Johnson tried to avoid having this appear as simply a U.S.-France problem, whereas President de Gaulle wanted to make it into a U.S.-French problem.

Q: Anything else on Europe before we pass on? There are, I'm sure, endless little instances of activity—

RUSK: I would like to emphasize again that there was nothing in the allegation that Vietnam had cause us to divert our attention from Europe, and that we were neglecting Europe because of Vietnam. This just wasn't so. We were taking a full part in all aspects of European affairs in which our presence was indicated. And we spent a great deal of time on European questions during the Johnson Administration.

Q: Is the same thing true of the continent you mentioned a while ago as being particularly to Europe's interest—that is, Africa? Is that the one continent you did not visit while you were Secretary?

RUSK: I did not visit Africa while I was Secretary partly because I could not find a way to visit just a few countries without making a great many other countries mad. I tried to find an occasion where I could go to a group meeting of African countries, or something of that sort, but that never seemed to come up in just the right way. I regretted that because I would have enjoyed seeing some of Africa south of the Sahara.

Q: Mr. [Nicholas] Katzenbach did finally go, I believe, didn't he?

RUSK: Well, Mennen Williams spent a great deal of time in Africa, and Mr. Katzenbach did go, and other dignitaries went. The Vice President went on one or two occasions, I believe. But I never seemed to be able to get there myself.

We were a junior partner in Africa throughout the period of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. Our aid to Africa was only twenty-five percent of external aid to Africa; they were getting more from Western Europe than from us, for example. France played a very major role in aid to Africa, particularly to its former colonies. I felt myself that we ought to remain in the position of the junior partner; that we ought not to try to play Mr. Big in each one of the African countries; and that we should work out some sort of division

of labor. After all, the Europeans do very little in aid to Latin America, and we are heavily involved with Latin America. The Europeans do very little in aid to the Asian countries, and we were heavily involved with the Asian countries. And so it seemed to me that we should expect and allow Europe to play the major role in Africa. That was not always agreeable to some of our African friends because they wanted more aid from us, and they wanted all sorts of other things from the United States. So there was some complaint during our period that we were not giving enough emphasis to Africa. Well, this was a deliberate matter of policy and not just a happenstance.

Q: I suppose the only time we ever really got involved to the extent of using our forces was in air support in the Congo in 1967, at least during Mr. Johnson's time—is that right? Was this something that he had to decide to do, that particular instance?

RUSK: We did drop Belgian paratroopers into Stanleyville in the Congo to rescue hostages who were being held there by the so-called Simbas. And then President Johnson put three C-130 transport aircraft into the Congo one weekend to attempt to avoid a European massacre in the Congo. We had been told along about the Thursday of that week that with the outbreak of the mercenaries in the Eastern Congo, that this was being charged as being a white plot against the Congo; and that all whiter people were in danger there. As a matter of fact, they had organized a mass meeting down in the Katanga and told people to bring their machetes with them because there would be things to do when the meeting was over. And we were desperately afraid of a massacre of the whites, including Americans. Our Ambassador thought that if we could find some way to demonstrate that we were supporting the government over against these mercenaries, that that would give the government something to lean on and to go to its people and calm them, and get away from this possibility of a massacre. And the purpose of sending the C-130's there was to make it clear that the United States was supporting the Congo over against these mercenaries; that we were not a part of any general white plot in behind the mercenaries to overthrow the Congolese government. But we had quite a to-do with some members of the Senate over those planes; but had we not sent the three aircraft in

and had there have been a white massacre, then we would have had more questions to answer. I was more prepared to answer the questions of why we did what we did than I would have been to why we did not do something.

Q: This was Presidential, too? This had to go to Mr. Johnson?

RUSK: Yes, this was the President's decision.

Q: To go ahead and send them in?

RUSK: Yes.

Q: And there was no doubt in his mind that this was some proper use of our force?

RUSK: No, no doubt at all.

Q: What about a much more long-lasting and serious, in terms of human costs, problem, the Nigerian difficulties? Is this something where we just couldn't really bring any force to bear or any influence to beat to bring about a settlement?

RUSK: We tried on occasions to get the two sides to talk with each other, but we were basically operating through the Organization of African Unity. We thought this was an African problem that ought to be handled by the Africans in an African way. In general we felt that it would be a great misfortune if Nigeria were to split on tribal grounds. We felt that the repercussions of that throughout Africa would be very severe. If you reorganized Africa politically on the basis of tribes, you might have four or five hundred petty principalities that could not sustain themselves; and you'd have political confusion in Africa that would make it very difficult indeed to sort things out. And this was generally the view of the other African states. By and large American policy toward Nigeria was the policy of the overwhelming majority of the Organization of African-Unity; only four of the more than thirty-five African states recognized Biafra or showed sympathy toward Biafra. The rest of them were in favor of the unified Nigeria, partly because they all shuddered at the thought

of breaking up over tribal grounds, you see. So we favored the Federal Republic; we favored the central government of Nigeria. But in the interest of trying to get the two sides to settle the matter through palaver—through talk—we decided not to send arms in there, and not to involve ourselves in the fighting in any way, but to remain at some distance. I think in retrospect that was the correct policy, although now the federal government of Nigeria looks upon us as somewhat at arms length because we did not give them the arms that the Russians did and that the British did while they were having their battle with Biafra.

Q: Were we active in trying to keep powers like Russia and England uninvolved also?

RUSK: No. We didn't try to interfere with their shipments of arms.

Q: Even though they did provide a non-African type influence there?

RUSK: Yes. We were concerned about food supplies for the Biafrans; we were ready to put in large amounts of food ourselves from our own stocks and were prepared to divert food ships going to other countries to Biafra. But the leaders of the two sides in Nigeria never could get together on the ground rules for furnishing food to the Biafrans, so the problem was not the availability of food but the ability to get it to those who were hungry. And Colonel [Chukwuemeka O.] Ojukwu, the leader of the Biafran forces, has to carry a heavy share of the responsibility for the deaths by starvation in Biafra because he too was very difficult about the ground rules for getting the food in.

Q: I guess the issue in Africa then that has excited the longest political interest here was the whole complex of issues involving Rhodesia and the U.N. policy. Did these cause a great deal of trouble because of their domestic political importance?

RUSK: We had some domestic reaction toward the Rhodesian situation. In general we felt this was a British problem—we tried to stay one or two steps behind Britain in it because we did not want to buy the Rhodesian problem as being one of our own. We have a commitment to human rights that generally makes us feel that the Rhodesians

ought to give some sort of political representation to the blacks in Rhodesia; we felt that it would have been desirable for the problem of the blacks to be settled between Britain and Rhodesia before Rhodesia became fully independent. But in general we acted in support of the general attitude in the U.N. on Rhodesia, and our sanctions on Rhodesia were part of U.N. sanctions. But we didn't crusade on the subject, and we didn't—what we were trying to do was to keep ourselves from getting very much involved in it.

Q: Did our private sector cooperate reasonably well with those voluntary sanctions?

RUSK: In general, they cooperated reasonably well.

Q: Does that also apply to the voluntary sanctions against South Africa?

RUSK: Well, the sanctions there are not economic in character. They basically have to do with shipping arms into South Africa, and we complied with the U.N. resolutions on arms to South Africa.

Q: The NATO alliance—in which Portugal is involved—does that get us involved in Portuguese colonial problems in Africa on some occasions?

RUSK: Again we were never a crusader on these issues. We didn't ask for these subjects to be brought before the United Nations, but when they came before the United Nations we had to state our attitude—our basic attitude toward the problem. And that of course led to difficulties with Portugal because we thought that they ought to do more toward independence or self- governance of their African territories. So there were some tense times with Portugal, both inside and outside NATO, over our attitude on the Portuguese colonies. The historian will look back with some amazement at this post-war period to see the way in which the great colonial empires disintegrated and gave birth to more than sixty new nations, generally by peaceful means. And the United States influence has been behind that development. But it's to be expected that the most difficult problems remain for the end, and the most difficult problems are those that now exist in Southern Africa—

the Republic of South Africa with its apartheid problem, the Portuguese territories, and Rhodesia.

Q: One of those involves the United Nations World Court's decision in regard to what used to be Southwest Africa. Is that something we can support actively in such a way as to produce movement there?

RUSK: It's very hard to know how to move to get the Republic of South Africa to acknowledge the international interest in Southwest Africa. After all, it was a mandate; it should have been a trusteeship territory. But South Africa is determined to treat it more or less as if it were a part of South Africa itself. We were responsible—one of the responsible associated powers—in turning Southwest Africa over to South Africa as a mandate after World War I. And so we have some responsibility for the result there. But we're not prepared to use armed forces; we're not prepared to use far-reaching economic sanctions. We are prepared to work at it through peaceful procedures to see if something can't be done by a peaceful means rather than by armed action. That means therefore that we're not able to go as far as some of our African friends would like to see us go in trying to resolve these problems in Southern Africa.

Q: Again, as in the case of the other areas of the world, are there issues that occur to you that haven't occurred to me regarding Africa in which Mr. Johnson played an important role or a decisive role?

RUSK: There's one point that was troublesome, and that is there developed in the Congress a resistance to the numbers of countries that were on your aid list; and they did impose arbitrary limits on the numbers of countries that can be receiving aid at any given time. Now, if you want to help five hundred million people in the subcontinent of Asia, you can do it by helping the government of India—one country. But if you want to help five hundred million people in all of Latin America and all of Africa, you've got to deal with about sixty countries. So if you think in terms of people, it doesn't make any sense to

impose arbitrary restrictions on the numbers of countries with which you can be dealing in your foreign aid operations. So when the Congress imposed these arbitrary limits, that drove us away from bilateral aid relations with many African countries and forced us to adopt a regional approach to African needs. That caused some anxiety in Africa; caused some resentment in Africa, because we were not able to act on a bilateral basis. But this was a direct result of the action taken by Congress to impose arbitrary limitations on the numbers of countries.

Q: And the Administration was unable to keep Congress from taking that action?

RUSK: Yes, we opposed it, but we were not successful in preventing it.

Q: In line with that, we've mentioned foreign aid a number of times in regard to certain countries in some general ways. Is that type of restriction that Congress passed over your opposition, as well as the generally decreasing level of aid through the Johnson years, connected directly to the Vietnam problem and the problems growing out of it?

RUSK: I don't think that what happened to foreign aid—I don't think that the various restrictive amendments in the foreign aid bill were primarily the result of Vietnam; there were one or two that were directly related to Vietnam such as “No foreign aid to a country that's trading with North Vietnam.” and that sort of thing. But I think that before the end of the Johnson Administration we became aware of a general mood of withdrawal in the United States. It was not doctrinal isolationism as such. People didn't stand up and say, “I am an isolationist.” But they would stand up and say, “I am not an isolationist, but: I want to withdraw from Southeast Asia regardless of the consequences,,, or, I want to withdraw troops from NATO,” or, “I want to make deep slashes in foreign aid”, or, “I want to impose import quotas on imports,” or, “I want to give overriding priority to the domestic needs at the expense of our foreign policy obligations.”

Now a great deal turns on whether this is a passing mood from which we will recover after Vietnam, or whether we're moving into a cyclical trend toward isolationism, such as

we were in during the 1930's—the '20's and '30's. The consequences of the are vast of course, and much turns on whether the United States is going to be willing to remain a part of world affairs and play its role to organize a peace in the world, or whether it's going to draw into its own internal affairs and pretend that the rest of the world is not there. We could undo a great deal that has been done in this post-war period if we should move to a period of isolationism.

Q: A lot was made by the AID Agency and other people during President Johnson's Administration of the fact that our emphasis changed over the course of those years from industrial development emphasis to interest in agricultural development and health programs, population programs, and so on. Was this a direct result of Mr. Johnson's personal preference in the aid area, or was this the result of advice that the Department of State had formulated before his decision?

RUSK: This came about because we were trying to draw some lessons from the experience that we had had in foreign aid in the post-war period, particularly in the developing countries. And it seemed to us that emphasis on industrialization had gotten out of perspective, and that what was being neglected were these great fundamental sectors such as agriculture, education, public health; and we reflected upon the lessons that we learned from the development of the United States itself when we were just at the turn of the century and still a country with large undeveloped areas in our own country. And so we decided that foreign aid ought to shift its emphasis to education, to agricultural development, and to public health, in order to provide the base for an expanding market and to provide an opportunity for local industry to get started. We were also influenced by the food crisis. The developing countries have got to learn to grow more food because, the industrialized countries are just not going to be able to make available enough food to meet their needs with expanding populations. And so a real green revolution in agriculture was of the utmost importance if these countries were going to begin to feed themselves in the way that was necessary if they were to have minimum standards of nutrition. President Johnson did a great deal in that direction. He was very much interested in the green

revolution. And he and Secretary of Agriculture [Orville] Freeman worked very hard at it through the AID program and otherwise to get agriculture lifted in priority among the developing countries as a sphere of development.

Q: Did it hamper the administration of those aid policies for Mr. Johnson to require the personal approval of projects of any size in the White House? What was it—ten million dollar projects or more that had to be approved over there?

RUSK: From a purely bureaucratic point of view, this was at times inconvenient; but from the point of view of getting accomplished what the President himself wanted to accomplish, I think it was probably necessary. The President himself watched very closely the performance of the countries to whom aid was being given. Well, for example, in his book the historian will find an account of what we did to help India get its food situation turned around. It was necessary to cause India to make a complete change in its priorities in its development programs and to give greater emphasis to agriculture, and to open up the channels of trade between the provinces of India. So President Johnson gave a lot of personal attention to these development problems and insured that he would have that personal effect by drawing into his own hands a final release of important aid grants.

Q: But the quid pro quos he was seeking by drawing that into his hands were performance guarantees and not things connected with our short-run goals?

RUSK: That's right.

Q: In Vietnam or elsewhere.

RUSK: That's right. He was interested in performance—performance by the aid recipient, as well as performance by our own aid operation. The dominant theme of President Johnson's Administration was, “It's not rhetoric that counts, it's performance,” it's what you actually do. And he was very insistent upon performance as compared with words.

Q: Mr. Rusk, you've been patient with me for a good long time; we've got some time left on this tape. I'd be happy for you to add anything that you think important about your relationship with Mr. Johnson, or your activities in the Department, or anything else for that matter. I certainly don't want to end seeming to cut you off. Is there anything that you think is important to put into this record?

RUSK: Well, there are a good many things we could talk about. I don't want to prolong it unduly. Someone once asked me what I considered to be the most important achievement during my years as Secretary of State, and I answered that I helped to add eight years to the time since the nuclear weapon had been used in anger. Now I think that the historian will probably have other evidence at his disposal; but as it looked to us in the 1960's and still looks to me in March 1970, the overriding issue for the human race is how to avoid a nuclear war. We have thousands of megatons lying around in the hands of frail human beings, and if those megatons are fired—if they go off—then there's a real question as to how much of the human race can survive. Certainly there will be nothing but rubble in most of the northern hemisphere. Everything that you do in foreign policy has to be measured therefore by whether it contributes to or detracts from the possibility of maintaining peace in a nuclear world. Gradually we may be able to get these nuclear weapons under some control of law—the Partial Test Ban Treaty, the Nonproliferation Treaty are a good beginning. The SALT talks will be very important in this connection. And I hope we can get some limitation on strategic weapons in the SALT talks. But avoiding nuclear war is the overriding problem.

Close behind it are other great problems like the population explosion. By the time this transcript is available to the reader, the impact of the population problem will be clear for everybody to see; but that is something that the human race has got to deal with, and it is not yet dealing with it in an effective way.

The relations between the races is another great problem—the white race is a minority race in the world, and it has got to come to terms with the colored races of the world. We

are making some progress on that, but we still have not gone far enough. And if we have a division in the world between the colored and the white races, then we'll have the problems of an enormous impact upon our hands.

Then the gap between the developing countries and the developed countries is a matter of great concern. It has been estimated that the per capita gross national product favors the developed countries at a ratio of about twelve-to-one compared to the developing countries. That gap is widening instead of closing. By the end of the century it might be twenty-to-one, so you may have a great division in the world between the haves and the have-nots that will be a source of friction and maybe even violence before the end of the century.

So there are major problems still ahead of us. President Johnson tried to address himself to these problems; he brought us a long way for example in public policy on the population problem. And we said things and did things as a government during President Johnson's Administration which would have been almost unthinkable during earlier Administrations. The public policy of the United States now favors population control, and that was largely a result of the things that President Johnson did to call people's attention to the issues and to get our aid program in behind population planning programs in other countries.

Q: Did you ever try to answer the question, what was your greatest failure in eight years?

RUSK: I think the greatest mistake was the Bay of Pigs. I think the greatest failure we had was in failing to bring the Vietnam war to a conclusion while we were still in office. The greatest crisis we had was the Cuban missile crisis. But I think the greatest satisfaction comes out of the thousands of little things that were done every week that built toward peace in the world. And we are developing in the world situation what one man has called the common law of mankind. The institutions of law are taking on more and more responsibility for human affairs. And so the causes of war are being reduced somewhat in variety. We don't have dynastic wars any more. We have a very few wars involving

frontiers. The chief causes of war still come out of the great confrontation between those who are committed to their world revolution and the free world who are trying to organize the world along the lines of the United Nations Charter. I think that ideological confrontation will diminish as time passes on, because changes are occurring. In the West where we start from the principle of individualism, we're trying to find better answers in the direction of social responsibility. In Eastern Europe where they start with the idea of the collective, they're trying to find better answers in the direction of individual responsibility. And so I think changes on both sides will reduce the impact of the ideological gap between them; and that Perhaps by the time this text is available ideological factors will not be playing the same role that they did during the '40's and '50's and '60's.

Q: That's probably as good a peroration or summary as could be asked for. If I can just get my thanks here on this tape before it runs out, because we certainly do give them to you, sir.

January 13, 1975

A modest note to future archivists, historians and other scholars:

The research scholar may have some problem in ascertaining the roles of individuals when confronting the mass of documentary materials such as that in the LBJ Library. During my eight years as Secretary of State more than 2,100,000 cables went out of the Department with my name signed to them. In addition, there were tens of thousands of memoranda within the Department and large numbers of communications from the State Department to the White House. On every working day throughout the year almost a thousand cables went out of the Department of State. On a normal day, the Secretary of State would see personally perhaps 6-8 of these cables before they went out; the President might have seen one or two. Of course a Secretary of State is responsible for everything which went out of the Department of State during his tenure — and I don't wish to evade that responsibility.

There was one simple device which I used to indicate what I had approved and what I had simply read for information and “noted.” When I read a document on which I was not making a decision, I would use the initials “DR” with a horizontal line drawn through them. This distinction is not infallible because there may have been an occasional exception. But it was a general practice and would cover more than 95% of the documentation. Perhaps it should be noted that my approval of outgoing telegrams was given on the original green sheet which went to the Code Room; therefore, the pink copies which were distributed around government might or might not show the distinction mentioned above.

Further, communications to the President from me were always seen and signed by me personally. For example, I always saw and signed the daily report of miscellaneous items which went over to the President for his “evening reading.” The only exception to this rule had to do with purely formal documents which were recognized as formalities both in the State Department and in the White House. An example would be a forwarding of a request from a foreign government for an agr#ment accepting the foreign government's nomination of an ambassador to Washington. Not once in the history of the United States have we refused to receive an ambassador nominated by another country. This sort of thing, therefore, was handled purely routinely and did not carry my own signature; whether the return document from the White House was signed personally by the President, I am not sure that I know — but it is of no importance.

In addition, it was my practice never to dictate memoranda of conversations between myself and President Kennedy or President Johnson. I did not keep an office diary like a Harold Ickes or a James Forrestal. My view was that a President was entitled to have a completely private conversation with his Secretary of State if he wished to and that if he wanted a record of it, it would be his choice. I would, of course, translate my conversations with the President into instructions to my colleagues in the Department. In doing so, I did not always tell my colleagues that these instructions derived directly from the President because I felt it was my role to stand as a buffer between the President and

the bureaucracy with respect to matters of considerable controversy. I make this notation for the record because future research scholars may spend time looking for memoranda of conversation between me and my Presidents, which are simply not there.

Finally, I had no mechanical means in my office at any time to record telephone conversations or other conversations in my office. When I first became Secretary of State I was unaware that the practice had developed that the principal secretary to the Secretary of State would often remain on the telephone to take notes on conversations between the Secretary of State and the President. When I discovered this practice, I asked that it be discontinued and I had a telephone in my own office connected with the White House which could not be listened to by anyone in my outer office. Again, my attitude was based upon my feeling that a President is entitled to privacy if he wants it. It is possible that State Department files will show a few of these telephone notes which were circulated to a few officers in the Department who were involved in the particular question. If the research scholar finds that this type of notation suddenly dried up, it was based upon my own decision to discontinue the practice.

The notes of the Tuesday luncheon meetings with President Johnson will be of special importance on certain subjects such as Vietnam. These notes were made — to the extent that they were made — by a member of the President's staff, such as Walt Rostow, Tom Johnson, or someone else. Those notes were not circulated to the other participants for checking before going into the record, but I have no reason to think that they are not very accurate indeed.

Dean Rusk

End of interview